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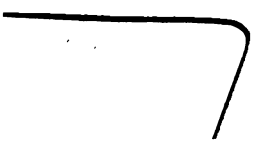
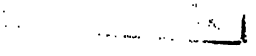
MARIAM

A ROMANCE OF PERSIA





NATIVE PERSIAN TEACHERS.

MARIAM

A Romance of Persia

BY

SAMUEL GRAHAM WILSON
Author of "Persian Life and Customs"

AMERICAN TRACT SOCIETY
150 NASSAU STREET
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To
MY MOTHER

PREFACE

This story is not fiction, except in its arrangement and details. The incidents are for the most part from real life and give a true picture of conditions and missionary work among the Armenians of Persia. It is the product of the leisure hours of a furlough in America, and was written at the suggestion of one who believes that the presentation of facts in story form is well calculated to interest young people in Missions.

MARIAM

CHAPTER I

"Vy! Ashes on my head! My house is fallen!" ejaculated Nunia, as she bent over a running stream in which she was washing clothes, beating them with a wooden mallet.

"Why! What has happened?" asked Dicranuhe, at the same time gathering up the edges of her skirts from the damp ground and giving the soiled garments a flop into the water. "Has your bride unbound her mount? Has she sat down or spoken in the presence of her father-in-law, like our neighbor, the shameless Hrepsima."

Nunia and Dicranuhe were Armenian women of the district of Salmas, in Persia. They lived in a village called Haftdewan. Through its narrow, crooked street there flows an arkh or irrigating stream, which is lined on both sides by willow trees, old and gnarled, whose branches extend from wall to wall, and cast a thick shade all around. A group of villagers were lounging about, some leaning against the high adobe walls of the houses, oth-

ers seated on the ground, and discussing the payment of their annual tax. Nearby, where the banks of the water course reached a lower level, the women were washing and chatting over their work. To the question of her companion, regarding the cause of her distress, Nunia replied:

"Avak! Alas! Worse than that,— my man wishes to send our daughter Mariam away to school and to a Protestant school, too. My face is black."

"Horrible enough, certainly," said Dicranuhe. "I agree with what I heard Uncle Harun say yesterday, that these schools will be the destruction of our girls. They will even want to choose their own husbands. Indeed, Hrepsima refused to be married to a young man whom her aunt and mother had accepted for her. They say she had become so immodest as to receive letters from her suitor before she was engaged to him, when she was at school with the missionaries when they lived here. This education will be our ruin."

"Yes," said Nunia, "I bewail my lot. Will my daughter be a priest? If not, why should she become a reader."

"My opinion is different," broke in Esther, a sister of Nunia, who had come on a visit from Urumia. "In our village of Degala, the Protestants have had for some years a school for girls, and the girls are greatly improved. Some of them have gone to the

THE MOUTH-BOUND WOMEN OF ARMENIA SPINNING AND KNITTING

city to a place they call Fiske Seminary. When they come back they do not revile and lie as we do. They are neat and clean and the young men admire them more."

"Better be ignorant than infidel," retorted Nunia. "Priest Mugerdech told us at the Festival of the Cross that the Protestants have no religion. They do not seal themselves with the cross; they have no anointing with meeron (holy oil); they eat eggs, milk and matsun on Wednesdays and Fridays. Do they not know that the infant Jesus refused to suckle on these days? I do not want to turn my daughter over to those who will rob her of her religion."

"Besides,"' added Dicranuhe, "last week the Monk Arsen was our guest and he said that these people were worse than Moslems. They spit on the picture of the Holy Virgin Mary. When they pray they close their eyes that they may not see the presence of the blessed Mother of God. They have no sacrament of marriage. What can we expect our girls to become if we entrust them to such destroyers?"

Just then there was a movement among the men and a rustling of robes was heard. They looked up and saw priest Mugerdech. He was clothed with a pilon, a full flowing black cloak and had a long staff in his hand and a cross suspended on his breast.

He smiled as he saluted the women, "Peace, my daughters."

They kissed his hand and responded, "Bless us, Lord Priest."

He had heard with satisfaction the last words of Dicranuhe and he uttered his approval with emphasis. "Right, my child. They are Prots or lepers. The blessed prophet says, 'Touch not the unclean thing.' These Protestants dishonor the holy apostles, calling themselves by the same title and teaching a religion which was invented in the New World; they dishonor the Holy Mother of God, saying that she is merely an empty casket out of which the jewel has been taken; they dishonor the holy gospel, translating it into the vile language of the infidel Turks and thus dishonoring the Master, who said, 'Cast not your pearls before swine.' Beware of them, my children." Priest Mugerdech passed on, satisfied with himself as a shepherd who was guarding his flock from the wolves.

But Esther had married a Nestorian and lived among them. She had seen little of her own priests and was not disposed to accept these accusations without question. Being familiar with the freedom of discussion among the educated Nestorian women, she said:

"I do not see how these things can be true. As I have seen, the missionaries honor the gospel, con-

tinually reading it to the people. One of their Khanums or ladies came to our village. She had with her a fair-faced, light-haired, blue-eyed beauty of a girl. Surely the Virgin as a child could not have been more beautiful. I asked the mother, 'What is the name of the child?' She said, 'It is Mary!' 'Then, is it not true,' I asked, 'that you dishonor Mary?' 'No,' she replied, 'we honor her and love the name because it is the name of the mother of the Lord Jesus, the most blessed among women.' Five of my associates are named Mary and the Sahib's (Mister's) wife is named Mary. They are good people and I am not afraid of their schools: I wish our Mariam could be a woman like the Khanum."

"Yes," spoke up Almast, emboldened by the words of Esther; "I agree with you. I wish the missionaries had remained here. They did nothing but good to us. My husband and I often heard them preach and their words were truth."

'Well," answered Nunia, "what you say comforts me a little, for when my husband takes a notion he is as hard to move as Ararat, and he seems determined that our Mariam shall go to the mission school."

At that moment two Moslems walked up the street and turned toward the door of the wine shop of Harun, an uncle of Mariam. These men were evi-

dently Sayids, — lineal descendants of Mohammed. They were clothed in the distinctive dress of their class, exaggerated to the last degree, as if by their costume they wished to insure themselves the honor which their dissipated conduct had forfeited. Their turbans and girdles were multifolds of cotton cloth. Those of one Sayid were green and the other navy blue. Their shoes were of green leather. Both wore long robes, which flapped around their ankles. One, whose name was Sayid Jaffar, had an aba or cloak which was lined with green, and even his rosary of beads of pressed earth from the holy shrine of Kerbela, which he dangled in his hand, was strung on a green cord. He had a full, round face, with dark eyes and black mustache. He might have been considered handsome, had not signs of vice and a bloated body told too plainly of a manner of life which had brought degeneration in its train. His apparel indicated the holy seed of the prophet, his appearance the libertine. Of course he could not pass without looking at the women, and with eyes ever open to their charms, he no sooner caught sight of Mariam, than he leered at her and exclaimed:

"Mashallah, that's a beauty!"

Mariam, pleased with the words but frightened at the man, drew back among the group of women. The men passed into the wine shop of Harun.

"Alas," said Esther, "when will our people cease to sell wine to the Moslems. Woe to the girl on whom a tippling Sayid casts the evil eye."

Without delay the women finished their work, entered their houses and barred the gates and doors.

CHAPTER II

When Nunia reached home she found her husband Hohannes occupied making for himself charukhs or sandals, from a piece of unfinished leather. He had just looped the last of the circle of eyelets when Nunia addressed him and again endeavored to dissuade him from sending Mariam away to school.

He replied: "I am a Mukdasi, I have made the pilgrimage to Jerusalem. When I passed though Constantinople, our neighbor's son, Unger, was a servant at the great school which the Americans have built there for girls. I went through the buildings with Unger. I heard the girls singing at their hour of prayer. I saw them come out after their meeting. They looked like angels and Unger said that they learn more than a bishop knows. I determined that our Mariam should be as much like them as possible."

"But," answered Nunia, "she is thirteen years old and it is time for her to go to a husband."

"No," said he, "that is too young."

"But you married me before I was that old," re-

plied Nunia, thinking that was an unanswerable argument.

"True," admitted he, "but that was in the days of our ignorance. Times have changed. Our Mariam must be educated."

"But," she urged, "we have lost so many, let us not send this one away."

"Alas," he rejoined, "do not I remember that the terrible cholera smote two; a wolf carried one from our roof at night; the cruel Kurds killed another. Of eleven, only our son and Mariam remain to us. Therefore, I say, let Mariam have the best advantages."

"Well, if you must send her off, let us at least obtain for her the blessing of God and of the Mother of God," entreated Nunia.

"Certainly," said Hohannes, "let us do all we can for her."

"Then," proposed Nunia, "I will take her to church to-night and to-morrow we will go with her on a pilgrimage to the Vank, the Monastery of Derik. For to-morrow is the Festival of the Assumption of the blessed Virgin. Priest Mugerdech told me her body was taken to heaven that she might plead for us; let us present a sacrifice for our daughter at her shrine."

"All right," said Hohannes, "I will have the

donkies shod and pick out a good sheep for sacrifice."

"And I," added Nunia, "will sprinkle some lawash bread and wrap up in it some fresh cheese. I will also invite some of the neighbors to go along, and we will start early."

That evening Nunia, notwithstanding her misgivings regarding the Sayid, took Mariam to the church. It was a curious old stone structure, with an arched dome. Shuffling off their shoes at the low door, the two entered and stood before a canvas of the crucifixion, which was almost falling to pieces with age. Above their heads was a fresco, which represented the judgment. In it a male angel, with black hair, is represented, holding a pair of balances. One scale is filled with light, the other with darkness. The devil and his imps are pulling with all their might to outweigh the light. Beyond the side of light are groups sitting peaceably in Paradise; beyond the other, souls in misery. Under a deep but undefined impression of her surroundings, Nunia placed lighted candles before the picture, and bowing before it, ejaculated a prayer: "Oh, crucified Jesus, let us see thy light."

She next obtained from Priest Mugerdech a written prayer to the Virgin to be hung as an amulet from Mariam's neck, and dropped a silver coin into his hand. Finally she paused and placed a candle

before a copy of the New Testament. It was a manuscript discolored by age and wrapped in a score or more of handkerchiefs. It was never read but was greatly venerated on account of its age.

When returning they passed the wine shop of Harun. They heard loud and angry voices within, which caused them to hasten their steps and filled their minds with anxiety for the inmates of Harun's house.

Let us see what was happening to the Sayids. The room, where they had been drinking, was in the court yard with the family apartments. While Harun was busy with the cattle, his wife served wine and arak to them. They drank copiously, as their one desire was to experience the pleasure of intoxication as soon as possible. After many a coarse and indecent tale, Sayid Jaffar lay back on the cushions in a drunken snooze. His companion, Mir Gulam Ali, was more wakeful. Finally rising, he went to the adjoining room, where the bride of the house was sleeping and began to force open the door. Harun, himself partly intoxicated, heard the noise, and scarcely aware of what he was doing, rose from the saki of the stable and cursed the disturber. The other answered with angry oaths and revilings. Harun, ready for a quarrel, pushed open the outer door. The door struck Mir Gulam Ali, who reeled and fell headlong. His head hit against

a chest, but he was not injured beyond a few skin scratches and bruises. Harun partly raised him and dragged him back to the other room. Gulam Ali, too far intoxicated to resist, collapsed on the floor and slept till morning. At daybreak both the Sayids got up and went to Dilman, the chief Persian town of the plain, plotting revenge upon the wine-seller.

CHAPTER III

The caravan was ready at an early hour to start for the monastery. Saddle bags, filled with food, were loaded on donkeys, kelim-carpets were thrown over them and a few sheep tied on the loads. Mariam and other children rode on top of the loads, and Mukdasi Hohannes, Harun and several men mounted donkeys, but the women, considering it a matter of ill-repute to ride a donkey, preferred to walk.

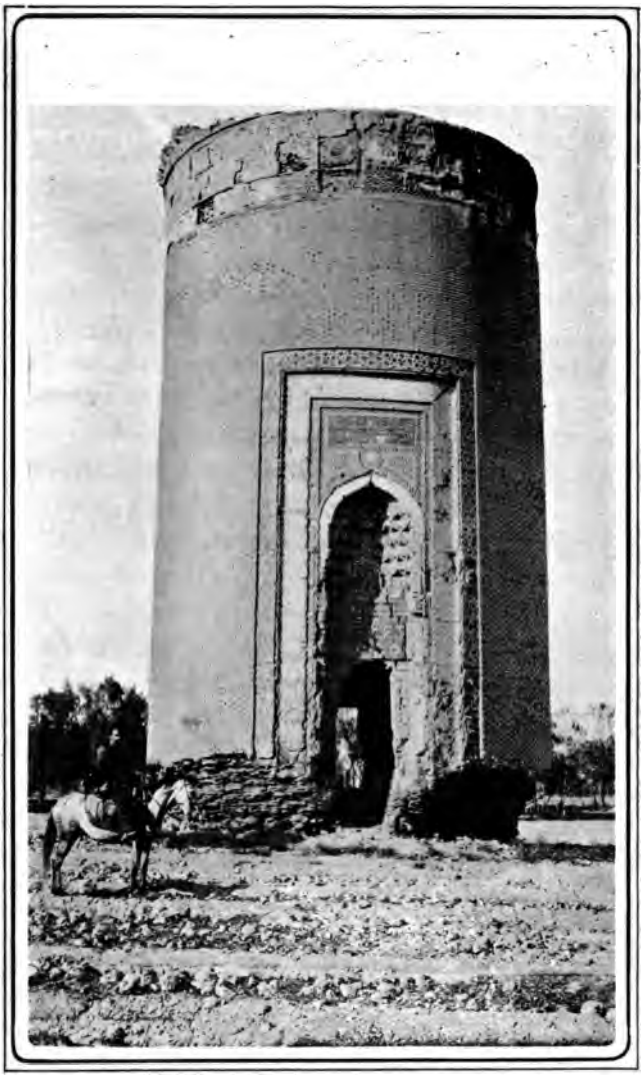
With happy hearts they went out over the beautiful Salmas plain, along its roads shaded by poplars and willows. Near the edge of the plain they came to an old tower, a fine structure covered with blue tilings. Here they joined a party sitting on the grass. Esther recognized them as from her own neighborhood in Urumia. Soon the two parties were on familiar terms.

In the caravan from Urumia was a peculiar looking child. Esther called Mariam's attention to him, saying, " Mariam, do you see that boy with the ring in his ear? "

Mariam looked intently and replied, " No, I see a fine-looking boy, but he has no ring in his ear."

"Oh," exclaimed Esther, "that is Abgar of our village. He sees you looking at him and smiles at you, but beside him is one with long hair braided and hanging down his back, and dressed like a girl. His mother lost all her other boys. Only her girls lived. So, when this one was born, she vowed to consecrate him to the Virgin and has pierced his ear as a sign. She let his hair grow long that he might appear like a girl and not be struck by the evil eye."

When they reached the monastery they saw that a thick wall was being built around its grounds. Its finished portions were high and strong. A number of strange men were superintending its building. Leading their donkeys inside and leaving some of their number to watch their stuff, Nunia and her company entered the low church door and humbly crossed themselves. They found a large concourse of pilgrims had already assembled. Some had come to give thanks for deliverance from sickness. These purchased at the door twenty or thirty candles and presented them to be burnt before the picture of the "Mother of God." An old woman brought a cock which she led around the shrine three times and offered for the recovery of a sick husband. The devoted boy, like a Nazarite, was brought before the Vartabed or Monk Arsen with fifty silver krans in his hand, which he presented. The monk



SALMAS TOWER WITH BLUE TILING WHERE THE PICNIC WAS SPREAD

anointed him with meeron and prayed over him, placing the crucifix on his head. He was then taken out and his hair shorn. The ring from his ear was hung up in the shrine.

After this Mukdasi Hohannes and Nunia called the monk to the churchyard, brought the sheep before him, and said:

"Our daughter Mariam is going away from home. We offer this sacrifice that the Lord Jesus would keep her from harm and error."

"Let her go in peace, my children," replied the monk, "the Lamb of God will protect her."

He then turned the head of the sheep to the East and sacrificed it. One-quarter of it and its hide he kept for himself. The head, feet and tallow were taken by the acolyte. Hohannes then carried the sacrifice to where they had prepared an ojak or fire. Nunia rubbed it with salt, cut it in pieces and put it in a large kazan or kettle. By the time the monks had finished mass, the pot was boiling. Then Vartabed Arsen came out and blessed the feast, saying:

"Eat in peace and God accept your sacrifice."

They all sat down to the feast. Abgar and Mariam sat opposite each other and made rapid progress in getting acquainted, their eyes speaking, though their tongues were silent.

At this point a colporteur came up with a hurjin

full of books. He had walked hither with the hurjin thrown over his shoulder. He was a peculiar looking man with one blue eye and one black one. He was poorly dressed, but a humble, devoted Christian and a walking concordance. If he were told any word of Scripture he could immediately name the chapter and verse, where it is found; or if the number of the chapter and verse were given, he would repeat the words. He had already found out that one of the Turks, who had brought bread and watermelons for sale, could read and had traded him a Gospel of Matthew for bread, enjoining him to honor the book as God's Word and not treat it slightingly, or woe would come upon him. He offered the gospels to the Armenians, but the Vartabed objected, saying:

"Shamesha, take away these books. These are not the true gospels, you Protestants have changed them."

"No," answered Shamesha, "there is no difference from your ancient version except where it is made to conform to the Greek text or to your own modern dialect. We know too well from Revelation 22, verses 18 and 19, the curse that will come upon any one who adds to or takes from the Word of God. We would not diminish it by one jot or tittle."

"Anyhow," said the Vartabed, "our prayer book

is better for us than the gospel. Many things are omitted from the New Testament. It does not tell us that the Holy Virgin is our Mediator, nor how her body was taken to heaven by the angels, as we celebrate to-day. Besides, it omits our fasts and our pilgrimages."

Shamesha opened the gospel at the 7th chapter of Mark and asked the monk to read Christ's warning about receiving the traditions of men instead of the commandments of God.

"We have proof," continued the monk, "that we are right by the miracles that the saints work for us now. Many people afflicted with Mary's plague have come here, besought her intercession and been healed. Not only so, but Saint Sarkis has healed many crazy men. Just last week a Persian lunatic came out of the dark cavern of our monastery, after three days' confinement in it, perfectly cured. The whole plain of Salmas is full of the news."

Shamesha saw the folly of arguing with the Vartabed and turned to Mukdasi Hohannes, who seemed impressed by the book. He was soon persuaded to buy a Bible. He also inquired about the mission school in Tabriz and on what conditions they would receive his daughter. Abgar listened intently to their conversation and a new longing came into his heart. He soon found opportunity to say to

Mariam, "Are you going to Tabriz to school?" Mariam modestly turned her face away and without saying a word, nodded her assent.

At this moment the arrival of Sayid Jaffar with some horsemen filled the company with misgivings. Ordinarily the coming of Persians would have excited no surprise, as Moslems frequently came to the shrine for the cure of their sick. But the official buttons on the coats of these men showed that they were farashes. They passed the bridles of their heated horses to the nearest Armenians and said: "Walk these horses around until they cool off."

Then noticing Usta Daniel, the blacksmith of Kuhna Shahr, the chief farash said to his companions, "Here's a chance to get our horses shod for nothing," and added, turning to the Usta, "Make a good job of it, too, if you know what is good for you."

Glancing at the repast of the pilgrims, they instantly grabbed the bottles of wine and drained them. They put aside their scruples about Christian food being an abomination, and devoured the feast. The Sayid took his share of the liquor but refused the bread and meat. Meanwhile, he turned aside to where Mariam was playing near the horses and, unobserved, gave her some candy, called rahat-ul-lughum, and remarked that he would bring her some more to the village. Then with a facility so

characteristic of the Persian, he addressed to her Nizami's description of Leila:

"Bright as the morn thy cypress shape, thy eyes
Dark as the stag's I view with fond surprise;
Surely thy beauty's power's resistless grown,
To enthrall and charm the world — but chiefly one."

When he returned, the farashes, having made an end of the food, suddenly said to the Sayid:

"Which son of a devil was it?"

The Sayid pointed out Harun.

Instantly the farashes grabbed him, beat him to the ground and cursed him, saying:

"We'll teach you, vile wretch, to lay hands on a Moslem. You cursed Armenian, how dared you strike a son of the prophet (upon whom be peace)."

As blows fell fast upon his pate, Harun cried out, "Mercy! Don't kill me! I am your sacrifice! What have I done? I am innocent!"

The police continued to beat and kick him, while the villagers stood by speechless and trembling. Then several of the Armenians who were superintending the wall, hearing the cries, came up. Among them were Khumbabed and Azgaser, two of a band of "patriots," or revolutionists. Seeing them dressed in European fashion, and for a mo-

ment mistaking them for foreigners, the police ceased beating Harun.

The "patriots," their blood boiling with fury but powerless to resist, asked, "Why do you maltreat the poor fellow?"

The police retorted: "What business is it of yours? We will attend to you shortly for building a fortress. The Catholic monk was right when he told the Suparest that you were preparing to rebel. As for this fellow, he has struck a son of the prophet. He has reviled the holy religion of Islam."

"He has killed a Moslem, a Sayid."

"Master Mir Gulam Ali is even now lying at the point of death, his head broken, his clothes covered with blood."

Uttering such accusations in unison against the hapless Harun, they turned to him and said:

"Up, you villain, and come to prison. Your life shall pay the penalty for such a crime."

It mattered not that Mir Gulam Ali had only a slight flesh wound, received from his fall, and was even then enjoying his pipe and pilau in Dilman. An occasion had been given to the hungry farashes to suck the blood of the despised Christians. With a cuff and kick they enjoined Harun to get up and be quick about getting them some money for their trouble. Harun collected all the pocket money there was among his friends and gave it to the farashes.

BASTINADOING OF HARUN AT THE MONASTERY

They mounted their horses and drove him on foot before them to the prison. The pilgrims soon scattered to their respective homes, much depressed by the events of the day.

Harun was taken before the Suparest, who ordered the farashes to bastinado him. Binding his feet to a pole and raising them from the ground they broke ten sticks beating the sole of his feet.

In an agony of pain he implored mercy, crying out: "What do you want? I will give anything. I will do anything; only spare my life."

The officials all knew that Harun by his prosperous farming and his wine selling had gained a full cash bag, so the Suparest demanded of him 1,200 tomans. Harun plead his poverty and the needs of his family and swore by everything that is holy that it was impossible to pay such a sum. The fine was reduced to 1,000 tomans, and under further torture he agreed to pay it. For this sum he gave his note, and was led back to prison until the cash could be delivered. To make up this amount his chest was emptied of cash, outstanding notes were collected, his horse and colt, two yokes of buffaloes and three of his oxen were sold, the coins of his wife's necklaces, which were a part of her dowry, were contributed and 300 tomans were borrowed from his brother Hohannes. Yet, notwithstanding his loss,

it was with a feeling of relief akin to joy that he started home after his release from their hands.

But, alas for Harun! His peace was short-lived. The next day the servants of the Mujtihid, or Chief Moslem Priest, came to his house and dragged him before the religious court. He was accused of blasphemy in reviling Islam and the prophet Mohammed, and having lifted wicked hands upon a descendant of the prophet. The Mujtihid declared the crime worthy of death and ordered him first to be tortured. He was bastinadoed, lacerating anew the wounds on his feet. His legs were then bound with ropes and a stick inserted, which was turned around and around, tightening the ropes until it seemed that the bones would break.

In his agony, fearing death, Harun cried out: "I become a Moslem. La illaha il Ullah, Mohammed rasul Ullah, Ali vakil Ullah. There is no God but God, Mohammed is the prophet of God, and Ali the vicegerent of God."

Instantly the tortures were relaxed and he was given a drink of sherbet. He was again asked to repeat the creed. He did so and was thereupon sent to the bath and circumcised. A waiter full of choice food was sent him from the Mujtihid's kitchen. His Armenian wife was divorced from him. He was given a Moslem wife, a sister of Sayid Jaffar, and an order was issued that the 1,000 to-

mans should be restored to him and a khallat or suit of fine clothes was added with the Mujtihid's blessing. The buffaloes and oxen were restored to him without payment, and a house was assigned to him in Dilman among the Moslems.

CHAPTER IV

The day of Mariam's departure for school soon came around. Her preparations were easily completed. The first stage of the journey from Salmas to Tabriz is a tedious one, requiring eleven hours on horseback. In order to avoid this long day and at the same time see some relatives, Mariam was taken, on the previous evening, by her father to Piajuk, a village on the lower plain. The charvadar's horse, with its huge pack saddle, was loaded with her bundles tied on with ropes, and the bedding thrown on top. Mariam was seated astride the load. They spent the night at her aunt's house, and in the morning set out and reached the place appointed for meeting the rest of the caravan.

After long delay Shamesha, who was to act as guide and protector for the caravan, arrived at the place, accompanied by his daughter. He reported that the other pupils were unable to come, that four boys and two girls had been ready and had mounted their horses, when Khumbabed Azgaser and Priest Mugerdech reached the spot. They showed a letter from Bishop Phanos, of Tabriz, prohibiting the

MARIAM AND HER SCHOOLMATES
GIRLS' SCHOOL, TABRIZ

children from coming to the Protestant schools, and enjoining the priests and "patriots" to prevent it by all means. Hearing this, several of the parents immediately decided to keep their children at home. But others refused to change their plans, saying that the education of their children was their own business and that nobody had a right to interfere. They started on the road, but Khumbabed seized the bridle of the one in the lead, and reviled her father. The priest also cursed with a curse any one who would send his child. The father jerked at the bridle and was unable to free it from the grasp of Khumbabed. So he struck the latter on the hand with his whip. Instantly Khumbabed raised his lead-weighted cane and knocked the father to the ground. The mothers immediately came and took their children to their homes. No one interfered with Shamesha as he was an acknowledged Protestant. But had Mariam been there they would have detained her, and Khumbabed even announced his purpose of going after her. To avoid this possibility, the party quickly fell on the road. After an uneventful journey they reached Tabriz and committed Mariam to the Girls' School.

Abgar had reached home from the shrine with a new idea. He was not long in opening up his mind to his father. When the family were seated around the kurisee, and his father was smoking the Kalian

or water pipe, he began abruptly: "Father, I want to go to school in Tabriz."

His father replied: "Yes, it is good to go to school. But why not go in Urumia. There are good schools here."

"That is true, but we are Armenians," pleaded the boy. "Here the schools are in Syriac. At the shrine there was a man named Khumbabed who said that we Armenians should learn to read our mother-tongue and quit talking Turkish and Kurdish in our homes."

"Right, my boy," said the father, "but it will cost me a great deal."

Abgar answered: "I heard the Shamesha tell old Mukdasi from Haftdewan that the greater part of the expense is met by the Christian people of the New World. Besides, Shamesha told a story about Mollah Nasr-i-Din. A man came to him to ask about having his boy educated. He said to the Mollah: "How much will you take to teach my boy to read?" The Mollah replied: "I will charge 100 tomans." The man demurred, saying: "That is dear. With 100 tomans I can buy five donkeys." Mollah Nasr-i-Din replied: "Buy them, then you will have six."

"Well, my boy, I do not wish you to be a donkey," concluded the father; "I will give half of

our raisin crop for your expenses at school. You may go."

So Abgar joined the caravan from Urumia and became a pupil in the Memorial School in Tabriz.

In the large city of Tabriz, amid the life and business of 150,000 people, Abgar saw many strange things. The full rich bazars especially impressed him. But he found nothing so attractive as the Memorial School, with its delightful campus and buildings. Resting in the shade of the mulberry grove and walking arm in arm with a companion along the avenues of almond trees were a pleasure to him day by day. When Abgar was informed that the entire school, grounds and buildings, were a donation from one Christian lady, it was a new revelation to him of the fruits of the love of Jesus in the hearts of his disciples.

The simple native style of life in the school suited Abgar, for he had been accustomed to sleep on the floor and to roll up his bedding and place it against the wall during the day. In the dining room the cloth was spread on the floor, and the boys sat around it. Tea with bread and cheese made their breakfast. Big Russian samavars were set to boiling and the tea without cream was sipped over lumps of sugar, placed in the mouth. For lunch there was a bowl of Matsun (curd) or some grapes or melons with cheese to add relish to the bread. The meat-

stew for dinner was eaten, not from the common bowl in the way Abgar had been used to in his home, but each pupil had a separate bowl in which the bread was sopped and eaten with a wooden spoon. If rice pilau was served, it was not forbidden to eat with the fingers in the royal Persian style. Abgar's first trouble arose from this habit. He was innocently enjoying his meal, when a pupil opposite him said:

"Don't eat like a porker; eat decently."

Abgar resented the interference and replied: "Mind your own business."

War would have been on in an instant had not the Monitor quieted them, but Abgar carried his complaint to the principal. The latter called the other boy and inquired about the case.

The boy said, "I wished to teach Abgar manners. He was not eating nicely with his fingers."

"Why," asked the principal, "do you not all eat with your fingers?"

"Yes," said the pupil, "but Abgar was eating with five fingers; he should eat with three only."

Abgar was a willing worker at the chores about the school. Many boys had been accustomed to allow their mothers and sisters to bring wood and water, but Abgar had been trained to help. His turn soon came to lend a helping hand at bread-baking. What a time it was! Three women

worked at it all day and night. Three barrels of flour were sifted and made into dough. To knead it a cloth was spread over the dough, and it was trodden under foot. To help at this the new gate-keeper from the mountains was called upon. He had only seen the family supply of bread kneaded by hand.

He stood aghast and said: "God forbid that I should trample under foot bread, the gift of God. It is a sin." He must needs be excused, but Abgar and the large boys had no such scruples. The women sitting on the floor rolled the lumps of dough into thin sheets like wrapping paper and baked them by throwing them against the sides of an underground oven, called a tandur. Abgar helped to spread these thin loaves on the floors, and to stack them, when dry and crisp, upon a rack in the cellar.

The even tenor of school life was interrupted by a troublesome incident. A new purse with ten tomans in silver disappeared at night from the box of a boy named Hosef. He had just received a cheque from home for his tuition but had not yet paid it over to the principal. Who was the thief? The money had disappeared after the gates were locked. Therefore it was likely someone in the school had taken it. Abgar had been seen to rise from his bed and go to the corner where Hosef's box was. He only of the boys had seen Hosef

receive his money. Abgar denied any knowledge of the theft and said he had risen simply to shut the window. In spite of this denial, suspicion settled upon him. Nearly all the boys believed him guilty and began to shun him. Hosef loudly demanded that he should be compelled to pay back his money. One of the teachers recommended a search of all the rooms, and himself undertook this disagreeable task. A peculiar string with which Hosef's money bag had been tied was found among Abgar's clothes. On this the teacher became convinced of his guilt and advised his expulsion from the school. The principal was at a loss what to do. Things looked pretty dark for Abgar. His one consolation was from Mariam, for when their eyes met at church he was assured that she trusted him. When the singing class of boys and girls met at the Girls' School, even though they were on the opposite sides of the room, she found an opportunity in passing to say to him, "I believe you are innocent." As many others were of the same opinion Abgar was given the benefit of the doubt.

Mariam led an uneventful life in the Girls' School. She drank in knowledge as sunlight and her mind opened under her training as a budding flower. She was specially interested in her gospel lessons. Heretofore she had known of religion only from its rites and traditions. Now she received the Word of

ABGAR AND FAMILY SEATED AT THE KURISEE

God and its illumination brightened her life. Following the custom of the pupils, she learned to pray and her prayers became a means of strength and growth to her as with childlike faith she daily sought the blessing of her Saviour.

At the Christmas vacation she and other boarding pupils from a distance could not return to their homes. On Christmas day, which is January 6, according to the Armenian calendar, she went to the Gregorian church. She took her place in the gallery reserved for women. The liturgy for the mass, celebrated in the ancient Armenian, which few understood, was drawing to a close after several hours, during which the congregation stood. Bishop Phanos was officiating. He was dressed in long flowing robes, of gorgeous coloring, and a gold-embroidered cape. His mitre was very large and was covered with enameled pictures. On his breast were suspended a silver cross and a picture of the Catholicos of the Armenian Church, encircled with gems. His countenance was stern and proud and, though largely concealed under his full black beard, yet indicated, specially in the flashing black eye, a domineering disposition. He was attended by a full company of priests, deacons and acolytes. The church was perfumed with incense, hundreds of candles burned before the pictures. The altar-screens were pulled back and forth in a manner ut-

terly without significance to Mariam and the other women and doubtless to the men also. Mariam was attracted to the singing. A score of boys, robed in surplices of variegated cotton prints, had been trained, and they rendered the ancient chants. The leader was Azgaser, whose deep magnificent voice gave tone to the choir. Mariam recognized him as a man whom she had seen in Salmas at the shrine. She also noticed that he kept glancing up at the gallery.

The special matter of interest, and one the meaning of which was plain to Mariam from her reading of the gospels, was a representation of the baptism of Jesus. A vessel filled with water was placed before the altar. A priest brought a silver cross and immersed it in this vessel. Another priest came bearing a silver dove from whose mouth meeron or holy oil was poured out upon the water. Then the dove was borne in procession around the interior of the church, accompanied by the numerous clergy. The people bowed themselves before it in adoration. Then the cross was taken from the water by a boy named Haritune, whose father, Baron Sarkis, had given a good sum of money for this privilege, which was supposed to bring a blessing. The cross was placed upon Haritune's breast and the people came up and devoutly kissed it. After the ceremonies were finished they made a rush with their bottles

and vessels to procure some of the water as a panacea for their ills.

The cross itself was taken with further ceremonies to the house of Baron Sarkis. Its presence for a fortnight in his house was regarded as bringing a double blessing to Haritune. Baron Sarkis made a great feast. Bishop Phanos, Priest Guerg and rich friends and relatives were all invited. As Abgar was Haritune's cousin, he was asked to come and help to serve the guests. Ordinarily Sarkis lived with his family in one room and ate and slept on the floor under the kurisee. But for weddings and festivals they opened up the great rooms which were furnished in Russian style. Still they so far kept to their oriental ways that none but men were present at the feast. Abgar was much interested to see high life among his people in this semi-foreign aspect. The antepast of relishes, appetizers and liquors, the numerous courses and change of plates, the humorous sallies of the tamadar or toastmaster, as he proposed the health of each guest in turn, were an astonishment to him. The amount of liquor drank was no surprise, for the drinking custom in the Urumia villages was the same, but the new varieties of drinks from Europe amazed him. According to the principal's instructions, Abgar restrained from any indulgence in these intoxicants, while enjoying,

after the feast, his portion of the delicious viands.

All the ceremonies of the church had a marked influence on Mariam, but not in the way that might be supposed. They opened her eyes and clarified her Christian knowledge. She thoughtfully considered them and saw how formal and unscriptural such worship was. In the shrine and the church at Haftdewan she had joined with heart and devotion in these ceremonies. Now she felt an aversion to such vain services. Bowing before pictures, burning of candles, kneeling before crosses, the mummeries of priestcraft — seemed to her empty forms. From that Christmas day she became in heart an evangelical Christian.

CHAPTER V.

A vacation was necessary in the schools by reason of Muharram. On its tenth day the fanatical demonstrations of the Persians in mourning for their martyred Iman Hussain made the streets dangerous for children. On that day Mariam asked permission to visit the preacher's wife and see the processions from the roof of their house. Her good behavior secured her this concession, and by going early she avoided any danger. Abgar by intuition or otherwise knew of this plan, and though the boarding pupils were prohibited from going elsewhere than the roof of the dormitory to see the sights, Abgar appeared at the parsonage. There, in quiet, modest ways, after the manner of the Orient, by glances and exclamations rather than by direct address, he made his presence felt, and kept in communication with Mariam. It seemed to him a great day, in that it gave him opportunity to be near the one to whom most of all he was attracted. So standing on the edge of the flat roof, behind the parapet, they watched the processions. Thousands of people like them were on the roofs eager to see the spectacle.

The devotees, who were attracting to their barbarous performance Christians and Moslems alike, were not men of a special class. They were from the ordinary walks of life, but wrought up to a condition of frenzied excitement through witnessing the Passion Play and hearing the stories of the slaughter of Iman Hussain and his family on the plain of Kerbela. In the morning they assembled in the various Mosques and formed in processions, which marched to the sound of weird music scarcely audible amid the din. First came men bearing the national banner of the Lion and the Sun, others with tukhs or steel plumes and mirrors, then bands of boys chanting the mournful tale of Hussain's death, followed by a man clashing cymbals. After him was a squad of men, barefoot and naked to the waist, who, with measured beats, pounded themselves until their breasts were black and blue. Other bands had clubs or chains, some cat-o'-nine-tails of iron or straps, tipped with steel, with which they lacerated their backs. The bands were divided into sections and had a series of cries and responses, the chief ones being "Shah Hussain," "Vy Hussain." The cries were mingled wildly and repeated again and again as the procession moved on.

One man carried a tulug or leather water bottle, and others raised aloft metallic hands; for when Hussain had gone on that fatal day to the Euphrates

for water, the bottle was pierced with an arrow and the water spilled. When Abbas was surrounded, his hands were cut off. He put his sword into his mouth, and rushing at the enemy killed a number of them. There followed a riderless horse richly-caparisoned, eloquent of the fallen Hussain. After this came a company of children strapped to horses, their heads lacerated with sword cuts and their garments red with the blood which flowed down upon them. Mariam could scarcely endure the sight as the men with strange carefulness gently stroked the infants' heads with the sharp swords. But women moving on in the throng, evidently the mothers, who had vowed to devote their children to the holy Iman, watched them with eager solicitude and with pious gratitude, thinking that now they were sure of a blessing. Other children were covered with chaff and ashes, representing Zeinab and her little ones taken captive to Syria and a band of women followed them weeping and wailing.

Last of all marched a corps of devotees who wished to acquire special merit. On they came with a swaying half-sidewise gait. Each with one hand grasped the girdle of the one in front, while with the other hand he brandished a bloody sword. With wild excitement they flashed their swords in the air and brought them down upon their shaven heads. Their scalps were haggled and mangled in irregular

gashes. The blood poured down on their faces, dyed with red their white robes, and made them a sight revolting and sickening, while their wild, frenzied, unceasing cry of "Shah Hussain!" "Hasan Hussain," like the shouts of the prophets of Baal, was deafening.

Mariam felt almost brutal to be gazing at such a spectacle, but it had a strange fascination for the crowd. She noticed on closer inspection that men were keeping pace behind the devotees with long sticks to ward off the blows which might inflict mortal injury. As she observed this fact, a man attracted her attention by the special energy with which he was brandishing his sword, while a Sayid, stick in hand, was keeping pace behind him. As they came just opposite her, she recognized with horror that the devotee with the drawn sword was her uncle Harun. She grew sick at heart to see him engaged in this barbarous performance. He had felt that he must take part in it in order by a show of zeal for his newly-professed faith to insure his safety, and that the largess reaching him as a new convert might be increased.

The other man was none other than Sayid Jaffar. He had come up to Tabriz to procure from the government his yearly stipend — a sort of pension which his fathers before him had received as Sayids, and for which no service had been rendered or was

expected. He also found the Passion Play at the takia of the Crown Prince, a great attraction in Tabriz during Muharram. The Sayid from his place in the procession looked up at Mariam and recognized her. With a nod and a smile, he said to himself, "Thank God, I have got my eyes upon that pretty girl again. Allah Akbar!" His glance, the strange look in his eye, his expression of countenance filled her with an indefinite dread.

At this moment Harun struck a back stroke with his sword, but the Sayid's attention was directed to the roof and he neglected to ward off the stroke as he had heretofore done. It came with a thud upon Harun's skull, the blood gushed out and he fell to the ground with a cry upon his lips, "O, Lord Jesus," in the Armenian tongue. He was dragged to the side of the platform of a ruined mosque. Drafts of sugar water were pressed to his lips to revive him. But exhausted by his previous exertions and by the loss of blood he soon lay a corpse. A voice near Mariam ejaculated, "The beast has burst himself, sure!" These words, so full of contempt, are a habitual expression in the mouth of the bigoted Armenian or Moslem in speaking of the death of one of the opposite faith. Mariam on hearing them realized that her uncle Harun was dead. A feeling of horror and grief came over her and she fainted away. She would

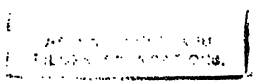
have fallen over the parapet, but Azgaser who had come up onto the roof in time to see and exclaim over the fall of the devotee, caught her with a firm grasp. She recovered consciousness quickly and was shocked to find herself supported by the strong arms of Azgaser. With an expression of thanks for his assistance she sank into a chair which Degeen Yeksabet, the preacher's wife, vacated for her.

Meanwhile a rough bier had been brought and the body of Harun borne away. The procession of frenzied devotees moved on, while one of the leaders kept encouraging them by ejaculating, "Another of the faithful has entered Paradise." "Another Moslem is welcomed by the black-eyed Houris." None of the onlookers except Mariam knew that the dead man was a renegade Christian nor did any recognize his dying cry as a call upon the Lord Jesus Christ.

Yet all the sight-seers on the roof were greatly shocked by the tragic event. They had heard of such occurrences taking place during the Muharrem celebration, but they had never been eye-witnesses of such a scene. Azgazar began to inveigh against the barbarity and bigotry of the Moslems. "Oh," said he, "would that our Armenian race might soon be free from their cruel rule! We 'Patriots' are doing our best to bring about this result. Our sufferings are unspeakable. Our condition is intoler-

HARUN, ARMENIAN WINE SELLER

HARUN MOSLEM DEVOTEE



able, especially in Turkey. Looters, like Musa Bey, carry off our girls to the Kurdish harems. To escape a like fate women rush headlong into the Euphrates and drown themselves in its rushing torrent. Even in Persia we are oppressed. In Salmas, at the Vank, I saw a man from Haftdewan maltreated unmercifully. Afterwards he was forced to become a Moslem to save his life."

Mariam interrupted him and with a great effort at composure said, pointing to the platform of the mosque, "The one who fell dead there was that man, my uncle Harun."

On hearing that, Azgaser burst into a flame of indignation, and with a torrent of invective denounced the oppressors of their race.

The stirring conversation of Azgaser was very attractive to Mariam. His appearance, too, his dashing way, his European costume, derby hat, collar, necktie and even the cane which he dangled in his fingers, made him seem so like a gentleman, that she involuntarily contrasted him with Abgar, who was bashfully standing at some distance. She glanced toward the latter and he easily divined her thoughts, which so well corresponded to his own estimation of himself at that moment. He seemed to himself as insignificant beside that polished, strong-minded patriotic youth, and he felt chagrined and deeply mortified.

By the time Azgaser had finished his patriotic tirade, the Muharrem procession had passed and Mariam went down from the roof with Degeen Yeksabet, her mind confused with thoughts of her uncle's horrible death and of the attractions of this young "patriot." Azgaser, too, walked away with mixed feelings,— disgust and hatred for the Turks marring the pleasure he felt on account of his new-formed acquaintance.

CHAPTER VI.

At the feast of Pentecost, Khanum said to the girls: "If you wish I will take you to a garden for a picnic."

They all answered with delight, "Our hearts are squeezed for just such an excursion."

She gave them directions, saying, "Do you get ready the kelims and the samavar and some lunch. I will tell Meshedi to call the hammal to carry the things, and we will start immediately."

The girls threw over their heads their white cotton chudras and drew them forward so as to cover their mouths. These coverings hung down to their feet, completely enveloping them. The street was comparatively wide in front of the school, yet such was the number of the donkeys loaded with brick and lime, wood, straw and food, that Meshedi was busily employed in driving them aside to open a path for the girls. They passed through the Gajil cemetery, a burial-place for Moslems, dreary and desolate, without a tree or shrub. As they reached the Gaziran, where the fullers and dyers were washing their fabrics, Meshedi said to the Khanums.

"Do you see those lamb-skins? They are being washed and prepared as furs."

"Yes," said Khanum, "they take a great many of them to our country. We also like the old carpets, such as these men are scrubbing and laying in the sun to dry. The sheen which the old carpets have is much prized in America."

As they went on a saka or water carrier, with his tulug or leather bottle thrown over his shoulder and leather bucket in his hand, addressed the hammal, asking:

"Who are these?"

"They are the Protestant school."

"Where are they going?"

"To Hadi Khan's garden."

The saka filled his tulug and quickly went off on a side street.

In the garden the girls spread the kelims under the beautiful, widespreading elms by an irrigating reservoir. Stuffed grape-leaf dolmas were ready in the kettle for lunch. The kettle was placed on two stones, a few sticks of wood were brought by the gardener and soon the dolmas were heated. A dressing of sour milk (matsun) made them a delicious dish. Piping hot tea from the samavar, drunk from tiny glasses, gave unalloyed pleasure. After noon some Persian women came to the garden and the lady missionaries seized the opportunity to

gather them in a group on the ground and read the Bible to them. At the same time one of the Persian women, haggard and shriveled, came near to the girls and sat down beside them.. Her name was Gari. She was dressed in the ordinary street costume of the Moslem women of the poorer class. Her cotton chudra, like that of the girls, was thrown over her head, but the in color was blue and white plaid. She had on shelvars or overalls, a combination of stockings and pantaloons, which enveloped her skirts. Her veil was a piece of muslin with eye-peepers of lace-work. Her slippers were toe-tipped with red sheepskin and had iron heels like horse-shoes.

As she sat down among the girls, she drew her veil aside and said: "Salaam alakum, Peace be to you."

The girls noticed this greeting as more cordial than the usual one of a Moslem to a Christian. "Allah sakhlasun," "May God keep you," is customary.

They made bold to return her greeting, saying, "Alaka salaam, To you be peace."

They also noticed that she was of darker complexion than the Persian women usually are, so Mariam inquired, "Where are you from?"

She replied: "I am a wanderer. They call me a Karachi or Gipsy."

"Oh," interjected Taguhe, "if you are a Karachi you can tell fortunes."

"Yes, that is my business, if you will give me a kran I will tell your fortune."

"We are poor school-girls. We have no money. We simply wish to have some amusement," said Mariam.

"All right," agreed Gari, "for two pins from each of you I will tell your fortunes."

"Well," said Taguhe, "here are two pins, tell mine."

"You," replied Gari, "you will have misfortunes, for when I came up you sneezed, and the moment you asked me to tell your fortune a bird flew over your left shoulder, but as I read the book of fate your subsequent condition will be fortunate."

In succession she told the fortune of several of the girls and many were the peals of merry laughter that rang out from the group.

Taguhe then said: "I have two pins for you if you tell us the fortune of the younger Khanum."

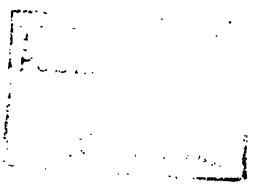
"Which one?"

"The one over there with the light hair, who is listening while the other talks."

"For her, as she is not near, I must consult the horoscope."

So saying, she unloosed a bundle which was tied under her chudra, and unknotting the handkerchief

GIPSY GARI, DAUGHTER AND GRANDCHILD



she took out from it a small brass bowl, the surface of which was divided into sections and circles and had many talismanic signs and Arabic letters engraved upon it. A small tongue or indicator, also of brass, was fastened on a pivot in the center of the bowl. Giving this indicator a whirl and looking intently at the beautiful face of the young missionary, she said:

"That flaxen-haired lady is not a real tark-i-dunya (nun). She will forsake you in a short time and be wedded to one who travels as swiftly as Satan on a horse that eats wind."

With the latter phrase Gari described the bicycle.

Next Mariam proffered her wage and asked about her own future. Gari in turn asked: "When were you born?"

"My mother," replied Mariam, "says that I was three years old when Sheikh Obeidullah led the Kurds on his raid."

"In that case," interrupted Gari, "you were born in the year of the elephant. You are fortunate. You will marry a rich man, with a ruddy countenance, shaped like the full moon. He will be somewhat older than yourself. You will know him by his clothes of green color. You will change your religion and be somewhat separated from your relatives, but you will be extremely happy."

Certainly, thought the girls, this description does

not correspond to any of her present admirers. Towards evening, after emptying the samavar another time, they returned to their busy school life.

Some days after this picnic a woman dallal or pedler came to the school to sell small articles. It was her habit to sell to the teachers and pupils. On that day Mariam came into their waiting-room to buy a handkerchief and some needles and thread. The dallal found herself alone with Mariam, an opportunity she had been looking for. She reached into her pocket and drew out a red apple, which she passed to Mariam, saying:

"This is a token of love from a handsome man, round faced and ruddy, who has lands and gardens, servants and horses, and a house richly carpeted and furnished. The bird of his heart has fallen into the snare of love. Your cypress-like form and moon-shaped face, your raven locks and dazzling brow have made him like Majnun. Your ruby sugar-dropping lips have intoxicated him. He longs for you as a draught from the river Kozar. As the nightingale loves the rose, as Khosrov loved Shirin, so he loves you. He sends you this necklace of pearls and gold. He would make you his wife."

"But," said Mariam, "I do not know him."

"True," replied the woman, "that is according to our modest oriental custom. A maiden needs to know simply that the man is worthy and loves her.

Your lover is a holy man, honored by all, descended from the greatest and best of men (upon him be peace). He is one of our saints. He is Agha Sayid Jaffar."

"What! Horrors! Marry a Moslem!" exclaimed Mariam. "Never! Never! The Lord Jesus defend me!" And with these words she rushed toward the door.

From the time in Muharram that Sayid Jaffar saw Mariam on the roof he had determined to follow up the girl and secure her for himself. He first went to the preacher's house and pretended to wish to hear the gospel from his lips. He hoped to see Mariam there. He learned that there were no girls in that house, but he surmised that Mariam was among the pupils at the school of which he heard. He set a watch for them and when he had learned from the saka near the Gaziran that they had gone to the garden, he had sent Gari, the fortune-teller, to find out all about the situation and to cast a seed of superstition into Mariam's mind, hoping that it might find a fit soil in which to grow. He also enlisted the dallal to work for him, aiming to win Mariam in the Persian way through an intermediary.

When the dallal saw from Mariam's manner of rejecting the proposal that persuasion would be of no avail, she instantly called out to her, shouting:

"Stop, I have another word for you. Sayid Jaf-

far is next of kin to your Uncle Harun, who died in Muharram. Harun married his sister. If you refuse to be the Sayid's wife, he is determined to seize, by force of law, the property in the hands of Harun's Armenian widow and children, and your father's property, and leave you all penniless. Will you not sacrifice your own preference to save your parents and all your relatives from penury? If you gratify the love of the Sayid, he will load you with jewels and enrich you and your family.

"No," shouted Mariam, "a thousand times No! What profit to gain the whole world and lose my own soul. I will have nothing to do with him. My father and mother and I would rather beg and live on dry bread. Be gone!"

With these words she fled from the room, locking the door behind her.

CHAPTER VII.

When Abgar had thought over the experiences on the church roof on the tenth day of Muharram, a resolve took full possession of him. A consciousness of his deficiencies led him to a determination to improve himself, so that no one might appear better in the eyes of Mariam than he. Strong purpose and industry showed speedy results. He won golden opinions from his teachers, by his studiousness and exemplary conduct. In the music class on Friday evening, at the Girls' School, he made rapid progress, always appearing to the best advantage. He wrote home such urgent letters to his father that he was persuaded to sell his raisin crop more quickly and to send a liberal allowance to Abgar. At Easter Sunday he appeared in a suit of clothes as neat and tasteful as could be desired. Mariam noticed all this with pleasure and her glances filled his heart with hope. Still the suspicion rested on Abgar of being a thief, and some were ready to say that these new clothes were bought with the stolen money.

When the Sahib returned from church, on entering his study, he saw signs that some one had been

there during his absence. His suspicions aroused, he counted his money in the drawer and found it 20 tomans short. A watch, too, was missing. He immediately revolved in his mind the question of who could have taken them. Abgar had walked behind him to church and had returned after the service, so he could prove an alibi. He remembered that one of the boarding scholars, named Thomas, had not been to church. It might be he, as he was a large boy and a comparatively unknown one. The back window had remained open and he might have entered by it. The Sahib went immediately to Thomas' room and without discussion ordered him to hand over the watch and money. Then taking the key from the boy's pocket, he unlocked his trunk and found a bag of money of more than the amount that was missing from the cash drawer. Thomas was a poor boy and it was evident that this was the stolen money. A search on his person disclosed the watch carefully concealed in his girdle. Thomas was confined to a separate room as a punishment and confessed his crime, including the theft of Hosef's money. In truth he could not well deny it, as the bag in which the money was found was identified as Hosef's. Thomas was immediately expelled from the school, while Abgar's reputation was reestablished in the minds of all.

From this time he made rapid development. Be-

ABGAR DURING SUMMER VACATION AT URUMIA

fore a year had passed he had grown from a raw country lad into an intelligent and ambitious youth, handsome and self-possessed and showing the promise of an intellectual attainment which would make him superior to those about him. The daily religious instruction of the school benefited him greatly, but especially the Sunday afternoon meeting of the Junior Band was an oasis of delight to him when the Khanum led the boys into the green pastures of God's Word and inspired them with noble purposes and high resolves. He had reached this condition of religious culture when there came a crisis in his life, the issue of which was of the greatest moment.

The holiday season in his second year at school had come. The New Year (Jan 13) had been followed by Christmas (Jan. 18) with the Cross Festival or Blessing of the Water. The religious meetings, begun so favorably in the Memorial School with the Week of Prayer, were continued after the holidays. The girls' school united with the Memorial school in these meetings. There was also a good attendance of the young men of the city. How delighted all were to sing the gospel hymns. Among their favorites were "At the Cross" and "Nearer my God to Thee." With Azgaser and some others the attraction was far from being a spiritual one, but even they could not but be interested in the zeal and fiery eloquence of the preacher, Badvele Gregor.

His soul was on fire and his words poured forth in a torrent of effective oratory. His zeal inflamed by the Holy Spirit fired other hearts. Following a series of earnest appeals during the week, his subject on Sunday night was, "Conversion and Consecration to God."

He begged leave to illustrate the theme from his own experience and narrated the following story:

"When I was a lad in Malatia, Turkey, I was apprenticed to an artisan. I had then no purpose except to feed and clothe my body. At length my thoughts were aroused to the concerns of my soul. My conscience became very uneasy. I sought to find out how I might be saved. Whatever I was advised by those around me, I was instantly ready to do, but I had no acquaintance with the Scriptures. Because my conscience troubled me, I listened much to the superstitions of old women. In order to be saved I determined to enter a monastery and lead an ascetic life. I began to pray unceasingly, day and night, in the wilderness and solitary places. In the hope that my sins might be washed away I shed many tears. I fasted for weeks and months. I went continually to church and remained there so long that my relatives were angry with me. Whatever money fell into my hands I distributed to the poor. I knelt before the pictures, I burnt candles, I read the Church books, but after all I remained

without peace of conscience. I was more hungry and thirsty for salvation than for meat and drink. In my agony I kept crying out, 'What must I do to be saved?'

"When I was ready to go to the monastery to become an ascetic, by God's great mercy an evangelical preacher came to our town and lodged opposite the house of my master, as Peter came to Cornelius. But I was filled with hatred against the Protestants. If it had been possible, I would have done them great injury. I was one day praying, weeping and reading a Church book when the preacher, hearing my voice, came up to me and in a quiet way inquired, 'What are you reading?'

"I replied roughly, 'It is none of your business.'

"He said, 'I simply wanted to say to you, "Read the New Testament."'

"I replied, 'Oh! would you have me read your Protestant Bible that I may turn to your religion? Your Bible is corrupted.'

"He said, 'Let us compare yours and ours.'

"Then we compared several passages in the modern version of the Bible Society with the ancient version of Mesrob, and I saw there was no difference. Though I could answer nothing, yet my heart remained antagonistic. I was striving to reach the fountain of life, but by a wrong way, and alas! I found myself in a burning desert. I was weeping

much, I was praying much, but in the ancient unknown tongue. One day I went to the preacher's house. I know not for what purpose. Fortunately it was the time of worship. The preacher was praying. I silently listened. I drank in the words of the prayer, as a dry tree. In my soul a voice said, 'This is the kind of prayer that is acceptable to God and profitable.' I thought, 'Is it possible for prayer to be in such plain, intelligible language, as man speaks to man?' After that by God's grace I had the spirit of prayer. In a little while I became so much attracted to the preacher, his worship, his reading and his companionship, that I thought, 'Would that manna would fall from heaven; I would eat and continually stay with him.' With my whole heart I threw away the old traditions and the formal ceremonies and became full of love for evangelical truth. My trust was wholly in the Lord Jesus and he gave peace to my soul. From that day to this he has blessed me. He is a very precious Saviour. He is able to save all who come unto God by him. Put away all trust in saints, and fasts and forms. Trust Christ. Come to him and be saved."

These words made a deep impression. An invitation was given for any who wished to stay for an after-meeting. Abgar, with some others, remained. When opportunity was offered he arose and in a modest way, said:

"For some time I have been troubled in conscience, and have been seeking peace. I used to pray to God in the name of Jesus Christ and the Virgin Mary, of St. Peter and St. John to accept me and pardon my sins. I did not find peace.

"When I heard the words of the gospel I threw away all other mediators. Still my prayers were formal and my heart cold. Now I have been able to look to Christ alone, and trust him fully. Peace has come to me. My heart is glad in Christ's salvation. I thank God for his grace."

His deep feeling and evident sincerity of conviction made a profound impression and other hearts were moved. On the following Sunday he was received, as a probationer, into the church. At the same time Mariam made a profession of her faith. Her clear conception of truth and strong and simple faith commended her to the session of the church. At the same time she was warned of the opposition she might meet and of the necessity of taking a firm stand. Especially she was reminded that her life as a Christian would largely depend on her marrying in the Lord; that only by marrying one of like faith could she hope to have liberty and peace in her Christian profession. She was reminded of a certain bride who had been prohibited by her husband from coming to church, of how the mother-in-law of another had kept her from the communion,

and how another had lost her Christian love and zeal by her contact wth hostile relatives. She herself approved of and accepted this advice of the elders.

After a few days Bishop Phanos sent and called Abgar to his residence. Abgar reported it to the Sahib and asked if he should go. Knowing that Abgar considered it an honor to be called, and that to prohibit him would only make him more desirous to go, and at the same time warned of the temptations the bishop was likely to put before him and of his strong opposition to the gospel work.

Abgar was ushered in by the attendant. The presence of the bishop was such as to strike awe to the heart of the simple village boy. Tall and stately, his black silk cowl, coming to a peak above his head and hanging down over his shoulders, and his long silk robes, made him still more impressive.

As he did not invite the youth to sit down, Abgar stood before him feeling as if his heart would come into his mouth. The bishop's voice had a commanding ring as without a preliminary greeting, he said to him:

"My son, why are you forsaking the Armenian race?"

Abgar answered: "I will never cease to be an Armenian."

"Do you know," urged the bishop, "that these

Protestants are the enemies of our race; they would divide it and take away the love of our people for our Church and its history. They would count our nation as nothing."

"I have never heard them speak against our nation," replied Abgar. "They only say that our Church needs to be reformed."

"Suppose it does, my boy," interrupted the bishop, "we bishops will reform it when we get our national liberty."

"But," said Abgar, "how can I stay in our Church when I don't believe what it teaches?"

"Believe!" exclaimed the bishop, with whom national interests were entirely of paramount importance. "Believe what you please, or believe nothing; be an infidel or be an evangelical, only do not break from your national Church and race. Do not be a traitor."

"I love my race," earnestly affirmed Abgar, "but my conscience is convinced that the truth of the gospel is with the Evangelicals."

"A curse on the Evangelicals," cried out the bishop, bringing down his hand with a blow on the table. "They divide our race. Do not join them. Come to me and I will send you to the seminary at Etchmiadzin for education. There the Catholics will do far better for you than the Americans are doing. The Etchmiadzin teachers have been edu-

cated in Germany. They will clothe and feed you without charge and make a learned man of you."

"My heart is now with the Protestants," replied the faithful lad. "I love them, and I have joined them."

"Love them, you rogue," exclaimed the bishop, with a sneer. "You mean you love one of their school girls. Abandon them and I will write to her father and get his promise that you shall have the girl by the rites of our Holy Church."

Abgar answered, "She, too, is a Christian."

"And forsooth are we not Christians, too? Are we Turks?" ejaculated indignantly the bishop. "Let me tell you, youngster, if you don't listen to me and leave off this nonsense, I shall have you beaten, your father fined as a law-breaker, and his taxes increased. What can these Protestants do to defend you? Could they do anything to punish the murderer of that missionary's wife? I'll teach that pestilent Gregor a lesson, too. I'll close up the church and school of these leprous Protestants. I'll buy their church and turn it into a theatre and drive them out of the country. Begone, you wretch. I swear by my beard and the throne of St. Gregory that as long as I have life I shall see to it that you do not marry that girl. As for her father, there is a Sayid who will attend to him. Begone."

CHAPTER VIII

For summer vacation Mariam returned to Salmas. Sayid Jaffar was there collecting the property of the deceased Harun. He soon began to make advances to Mariam and was even heard, over his wine, threatening to seize her. It seemed necessary to send Mariam away, so Mukdasi Hohannes took her to Urumia to visit her Aunt Esther. Shamesha also joined the caravan. Esther, with Rehana, her husband, and other friends, came to the bridge of the Nazlu river to welcome them.

Mariam exclaimed over the beauty of the plains and said: "I am charmed with Urumia. What a delightful place it is!"

"Yes," replied Esther, "it is as the garden of the Lord. It is so well watered. Three rivers flow down from the mountains and irrigate all the fields."

"How attractive the roads are," continued Mariam, "so many willows line the water courses and on every side I see fruitful vineyards and orchards."

"It is a paradise, praise God!" ejaculated Esther. "And Geogtapa or Gray Hill, where we have lately moved, is a village that contents my heart. Our

melons and grapes are our pride. But we have our troubles all the same."

"Why, have you any special anxiety now?" inquired Mukdasi Hohannes, breaking in upon the conversation of the women.

"Yes," said Esther, "the soldiers have just left our village and even yet we are fearful lest they return."

"Indeed," exclaimed Hohannes, "why were they sent upon Geogtapa?"

"It is a long story," said Rehana,; "I will tell you as we ride along. We have not had such heartache for many a day. One night three Moslems came to our village. They first went to the wine-shop near the ancient ash hill of the fire-worshippers, and drank to intoxication. Then they called at the house of the Roman Catholic priest Guergis, to collect a debt which he owed them. He was not at home, so they broke into his wine-cellar and drank copiously. When he returned he persuaded them to leave by promising to pay them. They went into the street, got into a quarrel and were arrested by the Kand-Khuda and put in a stable to remain till morning. They escaped in the darkness of the night. In fleeing one of them fell into a water course. In the morning his body was found and news of his death was quickly noised abroad. A mob of Moslems was formed and there was danger

of a massacre. To quiet the mob the governor ordered the arrest of a number of our men, including the Kand-Khuda. The latter was released on the payment of a large fine, but Ephrem, a phaetonchi, was summarily executed. The governor sent a company of 40 soldiers ostensibly to protect the village. They were quartered in our homes. Several soldiers were allotted to us. They lived off of us day after day. They wantonly defiled our store rooms and destroyed great quantities of our food. Esther lay in concealment in the flour-bin, more lucky than some of our neighbors, who fell into their hands. They beat us men and extorted money from us until the missions appealed to the Consul in Tabriz and relief came to us."

"How terrible!" exclaimed Mariam, breaking the spell of silence which had held the caravan while they listened to the narrative.

Then Mukdasi Hohannes inquired: "Is it safe to go there now?"

"It is comparatively quiet," answered Rehana, adding: "We had thought of taking Mariam to Gulpashan, where my cousin lives, but there the people are eating trouble, too."

"What is the matter there?" eagerly asked Hohannes.

"Just now," explained Rehana, "one of the Moslems who brought trouble upon us, a Sayid, has a

special spite against that village. He meets the men on the highways and robs and beats them. The women are afraid to venture to the city for fear he may insult them on the way, as several brides have fared badly at his hands."

"Oh," exclaimed Mariam, "would that the government would protect us defenseless women!"

"There is little hope for that," interjected Esther. "The men have petitioned for his punishment and the Missions have protested against his lawlessness, but without result."

"What is the name of the Sayid?" asked Mukdasi.

"Mir Gulam Ali," replied Rehana, "and he has a companion that is worse than he is, but the latter has been away a good deal of late."

"The one who troubled Harun had the same name," said Mukdasi. "I wonder if it can be the same man?"

By this time they had skirted around the high walls of the city of Urumia, following the road beside the moat. Then they crossed the Shahr river and turned toward Geogtapa.

As they approached the village Mukdasi inquired: "What is that large red brick building which appears before us on the top of the hill?"

Shamesha spoke up with enthusiasm: "That is our new memorial Protestant church. It has

been erected as a memorial of former missionaries."

"Where did you get those large carved stones which are in the foundation?" inquired Mukdasi.

"They were dug up beneath the Ash Hill," replied Shamesha, "and probably belonged to a Fire temple of pre-christian times. They dug up lamps, bowls and other pieces of pottery, and also some gold bracelets and armlets and a large cylinder with cuneiform inscriptions. We now worship Christ where the perpetual flame of the Parsees burned."

Engaged in such conversation they soon reached the house of Rehana and were made welcome. During the next week Esther took Mariam to a Persian Chautauqua by the lakeside. The assembly attracted young and old alike. Lake Urumia itself has dreary surroundings. Its dead waters, thick and of foul odor, are yet beautiful to look upon, and are specially suitable for bathing, because they buoy up the swimmer. Many groups had picnics in the garden nearby, but the real attraction, which brought together the missionaries, pastors and church workers, was the series of spiritual conferences in the tent.

The sessions which Esther and Mariam attended were occupied in giving reports of the conditions of the Reformed Churches. They heard with grateful hearts the glowing account which the Nestor of the

presbytery gave of the precious revivals of the past winter.

"Thank God," said he, "for his gracious favor. More than a score of our congregations were revived. During our 'spiritual week' it seemed as if we could see the Holy Spirit going from one person to another, pleading for admittance. Our meetings were crowded with thousands, our hearts were melted into unity and love, scoffers, libertines and drunkards were reclaimed, formalists and the indifferent were aroused. Many were added to our churches. The liberality and spirituality of our people were increased. Especially can we rejoice that in the college and seminary, the pupils were brought near to the Saviour, and our theological and medical students received a baptism of power. Young lives, not a few, were consecrated to the Master's service."

As they came out of the tent, Esther said to Mariam, "I thank God that my heart has been enlightened. I am happy in knowing and confessing my Saviour."

"How blessed," ejaculated Mariam, adding in a quiet tone, "I, too, received the truth in Tabriz."

After the meeting a refreshing drink of ayran, or buttermilk, mixed with chopped cucumbers and rose leaves was served to them. An ample luncheon of delicious viands followed and the steaming samavar was set out several hours later. Afternoon was well

advanced when the caravan started to return. As they neared Gulpashan and came to a point where the road curved and was obscured by a cluster of willow trees, a band of Persians rose before them. They were well armed and were headed by two Sayids, whom the company instantly recognized as their old tormentors. They were none other than Sayid Jaffar and Mir Gulam Ali. Without allowing any time for parleying, Sayid Jaffar, who took the lead, ordered the men and women to dismount. Turning a deaf ear to their cries the Persians stripped them of whatever clothing struck their fancy and of their watches and other valuables. Jaffar then ordered Mariam to mount a horse and make ready to accompany him. She cast herself on the ground before him, beseeching him to allow her to go with her friends. Esther, too, with wailing and tears, grasped the feet of the Sayid, declaring that Mariam was her guest, and that if anything should happen to her, her own heart would break. The Sayid tossed his head cynically at the wailing woman, knocked on the head Rehana and several men who ventured to protest, and without further concern ordered his party to bind Mariam on to one of the horses. They hastened off toward a Moslem village.

Esther and the other women, with tearful eyes and aching hearts, entered the village of Gulpashan.

The men, after a brief consultation, turned towards the city to go and inform the government. Though they had little hope of speedy or proper redress, yet with a desire to do something they hastened to the city to present their complaint. They had gone but a little way when they met a party of Armenians on horseback. They no sooner heard the account of the attack and capture, than they said:

"Those are the rascals we are looking for?"

"How is that?" queried Rehana, in amazement.

"Oh, Malchas, the blind evangelist, was reading the Bible from raised letters in a Moslem village. The Persians did not notice him and he heard them planning to seize an Armenian girl. He hastened to the city and gave us word. We gathered our band of 'Patriots' together and have come to rescue her. Who is she?"

Rehana answered: "She is an Armenian girl from Salmas. Her name is Mariam."

"Has she been to school in Tabriz?"

"Yes, she was there last year, I know," answered one.

This reply assured Azgaser, for the leader and spokesman was none other than he, that his supposition was correct and that the girl whose abduction had been planned was really Mariam, whose beauty had captivated him in Tabriz. And it was she who was now a captive and was being sped away by a

KURDISH WOMEN

band of Moslems. The very thought of it fired his soul.

Azgaser without delay called upon his companions to follow to the rescue. They took the direction indicated, and as so little time had elapsed they had hope of reaching them before they could conceal themselves in a village. Bending forward and pushing their iron stirrups into the sides of their horses and giving the animals free rein, they urged them into a wild run, like the Persian nomads, regardless of stones or waterways. Soon they could distinguish in the distance the dust raised by the Sayid and his party. The latter soon passed behind the high walls of a garden. Seizing the opportunity, the Armenians galloped around the garden and faced Sayid's company as they reached the end of the wall.

When Sayid Jaffar saw revolvers leveled at his head, he was dumbfounded, especially as heretofore no Christians had ever tried to oppose him by force. Since he could do absolutely nothing, he folded his arms and begged them not to shoot.

Mariam was no sooner freed than she fell at the feet of her rescuer and bathed them with tears. Finding her voice, she exclaimed:

"I was dead from fear. Praise God, you have delivered me. May God bless you. May I be your sacrifice."

Azgaser's heart beat with emotion, but he had no time for words as a caravan of Persians was seen approaching. Fearing there might be further trouble he quickly gathered the plunder which had been taken from the villagers and retaining it as a legitimate perquisite for the good of the national cause, threw Mariam on to the horse behind himself, and galloped away.

The Sayid, now assured that he would receive no bodily harm, called after them, vowing vengeance and threatening all manner of evil against the Christians for this interference with his rights. He invoked upon them the curse of Allah, who had manifestly created such a fair damsel only for a Moslem.

Mariam, with only one thought of safety occupying her mind, held on to Azgaser. Soon they rode into the village and he delivered her to her aunt. Esther overwhelmed him with words of gratitude, which poured from her heart like a flood, while Mariam's face flushed and her eyes sparkled as she tried to express her thanks and gratitude to her heroic deliverer.

CHAPTER IX

The next school year passed by. The gala day of the final exhibition of the Girls' school brought joy to pupils and friends. The hall was adorned with the fancy work which trained needles had executed, and young men thronged it to hear the exercises. The larger girls wore neat and tasteful dresses, which they themselves had made.

Mariam was dressed in a blue delaine. She had on a silver filigree belt, a part of her mother's dowry, and an artistic heirloom. Her hair hung in long plaits behind her back, and over her head was tied a white silk kerchief with a flowery border. She was a picture of loveliness — the center of all eyes as she stood up and read her essay. Its subject was "Vartan, the National Hero of Armenia." She told of his brave struggles for race and religion against the Fire-worshipers, and his fighting unto death that his people might enjoy independence and especially religious freedom. She compared him to Washington, declaring that both are heroes whose memories are hallowed in their anniversaries and who are first in the hearts of their countrymen.

After the essay she sang to the accompaniment of the organ on which she had been taught to play, the heart-moving song, "Mair Araxes," which voices the woe of Armenia and strikes a responsive chord in the soul of every son of Haik.

"Meditating by Araxes,
Pacing slowly to and fro,
Sought I traces of the grandeur
Hidden by her rapid flow.

'Turgid are thy waters, Mother,
As they beat upon the shore.
Do they offer lamentations
For Armenia evermore?

'Are thy spume drifts tears, O Mother,
Tears for those that are no more?
Dost thou haste to pass by, weeping,
This thine own beloved shore?'

Then on high uprose Araxes,
Flung in air her spumy wave,
And from out her depths maternal
Sonorous her answer gave:

'Knowest thou not that I am widowed;
Sons and daughters, consort, dead?
Wouldst thou have me go rejoicing,
As a bride to nuptial bed?

'Traitress never I; Armenia
Claims me ever as her own;
Since her mighty doom hath fallen
Never stranger have I known.

'Ah! Where now are all my people?
Far in exile, homeless, lorn,
While in widow's weeds and hopeless
Weeping, sit I here and mourn.

'Hear now! while my sons are absent
Age long past I still shall keep;
Till my children gain deliverance,
Here I watch and pray and weep."

The volume and sweetness of Mariam's voice was a surprise and gratification to all, and storms of applause greeted her. Bouquets fell at her feet from all directions and her smiles of recognition and gratitude sent the blood coursing quicker through the veins of the givers. It could not but be noticed that the two largest bouquets were from Azgaser and Abgar.

By good fortune Mukdasi Hohannes and Nunia were present and enjoyed the sight of their daughter's success. Nunia, it is true, was shocked at first to see Mariam stand up and read her essay and sing before the young men, but her mind was becoming gradually used to new ideas and customs and she dismissed all doubts by simply saying to

herself, " I am a poor ignorant village woman. The world has moved on and left me behind." Mukdasi Hohannes was delighted beyond measure and declared that his purpose was fulfilled and that there was not among the girls in the school at Constantinople one more finely trained than his Mariam.

The occasion which had brought Mukdasi Hohannes and Nunia to Tabriz was far different from a school commencement. Serious trouble had come upon them. Sayid Jaffar had carried out his threat and had begun to claim, in the name of his sister and that of her baby boy, not only the property that had belonged to Harun, but that of Hohannes and other relatives of Harun. Mohammedan law gives large and undefined privileges to the new convert to Islam. His Christian relatives are at his mercy. They become a prey to the Persian priests and officials, who fleece them under the pretext of furthering the interest of the new convert. Sayid Jaffar easily succeeded in taking possession of the property of Harun's former wife and children. The officers levied on Hohannes, and arrested and imprisoned him. While he was gloomy in prison Jaffar approached him with an offer of release and entire security if he would give his daughter to him as his wife. Hohannes declared that he would die rather than make his daughter a Moslem. From prison he sent an appeal to Bishop Phanos. The

bishop directed him to bring his appeal to Tabriz and to come up as complainant against the Sayid. Hohannes by giving large presents secured his release and came to Tabriz, accompanied by Nunia.

He had merely presented his case to the bishop's attention, in an interview, when another matter engaged his attention. The exercises of the exhibition had brought Mariam's affairs to a crisis. That day several young men were moved by an ardent desire to win Mariam. Each confided this wish to his mother, aunt or some old woman, and besought the good offices of this experienced friend to act as mediator to make the proposal and secure the consent of the beloved girl.

One who pressed his suit with ardor was Azgaser. He secured as his go-between Lady Sona, the wife of the wealthy Baron Sarkis. She was all the more ready to represent him and plead his cause because she was angry with Abgar, her relative, for becoming a Protestant and wished to cross him. As it was the beginning of vacation school rules were relaxed, so she readily procured entrance to Mariam's room.

Lady Sona said to Mariam: "Azgaser has sent me to you to say that he loves you with a whole heart. Since he first knew you, you have occupied all his thoughts. He is such a fine young man, handsome and brave. He is an ardent patriot, a

beautiful singer — popular, esteemed by all. Baron Sarkis has offered to be his best man and the godfather of your children. You know what an advantage that will be according to our customs."

Mariam replied: "I know he is no common man. He has excited my interest. His conversation has attracted me, his musical voice has affected me,— he moves my imagination,— but I am afraid of him, I do not feel that I can trust him."

Sona urged: "You remember how he showed his devotion to you and rescued you from the Sayid. Can you not trust your deliverer?"

"I am grateful to him for that and can never forget it, but my heart is not his. I like his manners and his genial ways, but I do not really love him."

"Oh," earnestly declared Sona, "you will learn to love him afterwards. A girl need not love a man before marriage. I had never spoken to Baron Sarkis before my betrothal. You will be satisfied. Your father and mother are willing. I shall give you this token and tell him to get ready the nishan or pledge."

With this she rose to go while Mariam said as they shook hands:

"Tell him I cannot agree. That is better."

Sona replied as she left: "I shall tell him you said you liked him and shall come again."

After she had gone Mariam found the token had been left behind in her room.

During the day a number of women found occasion to come to Mariam on various pretexts. They all spoke the praises of Azgaser and urged his suit. To all of them Mariam simply said: "I have given him my answer." Sona, in order to throw others off the track reported everywhere that Mariam had accepted Azgaser's token. All other suitors, except Abgar, gave up the quest as hopeless.

When the latter heard this report he was plunged in despair. He immediately sought Yeksabet, the wife of Badvele Gregor, and besought her to take up his cause. She readily consented and soon reached the school.

She was greeted by the matron.

"Have you heard the news that Mariam is engaged to Azgaser."

She answered: "I don't believe it," and passed on to Mariam's room.

She burst in upon the latter with the words: "What is this that I hear. They say you are engaged to Azgaser."

"Not at all," emphatically declared Mariam, in amazement. "Lady Sona was here on his behalf, but I rejected her proposal."

"Yet they say you have accepted Azgaser's token?"

" No," said Mariam, " Sona forgot it here and I have not yet had a chance to see her and return it."

" Why did you not accept him?"

Mariam with a blush and some hesitation said: " I feel that my heart is another's."

" Well, I am glad of that," replied Yeksabet, exultingly, " for I have come from one who loves you devotedly. Abgar was broken-hearted when he heard that you had accepted Azgaser, and sent me to offer his heart, his life to you."

Mariam gave answer: " I will make a confesson to you. To-day when others have been talking to me, the image of one has been continually before my eyes. It is Abgar. He may not have as much dash and style as Azgaser, but I feel that he is true and sincere. I can trust him. I have been praying to Jesus to guide me. And Abgar is a true Christian. I would rather live humbly with him than with another in luxury. What my heart feels my conscience approves of."

Yeksabet kissed her gently, and as she sat on the floor beside her she looked to God and besought a blessing on the two lives.

On leaving, Yeksabet added: " I will see your father and mother." This she did without delay.

Hohannes gave her a very sensible opinion.

" I am willing," said he, "that Mariam should do as she pleases. I do not know either of the young

men, but I think she has decided wisely, for the revolutionists are an uncertain set and often become wanderers. We know Abgar's home and friends."

Nunia pleaded that the priest might be called to perform the ceremony, but consented that Badvele Gregor should do it, when she saw that Abgar and Mariam wished no other. So arrangements were made for the public betrothal.

CHAPTER X

Meanwhile when Mukdasi Hohannes went again to see about his case at law, he found Bishop Phanos' countenance changed. As he approached to kiss the hand of that dignitary the latter said to him, with great severity of tone:

"So you dare consent to give your daughter to the Protestants, do you? You can expect no further help from me."

"May it please your holiness," replied Hohannes, "if you objected to that why did you call me to Tabriz with a promise of protection? Why did you take a retainer of 50 tomans as a condition of assisting me? You knew that my daughter was in the Protestant school and a member of the Protestant church."

"Yes," said the bishop, "but I hoped you would listen to my word and take her away from them. Now, on the contrary, you are betrothing her to a Protestant and that, too, by a ceremony to be performed by the renegade Gregor. I will teach you a lesson. The Sayid shall have encouragement to fleece you of everything."

"Holy father," plead Hohannes, "I kiss your hand. I am your sacrifice. My daughter so wishes it. I do not want to cross her."

"Cross her," interrupted the bishop, "you are her father. The authority is yours. You should choose whom she should marry. What right has a girl to oppose her parents."

"As you wish it, O Guide; I will forbid the betrothal. Preparation for its celebration shall cease. Only I beg your holiness to deliver me from that Sayid."

"I will do so," declared the bishop, summarily, "on this condition; that you take your girl from that school and give her as a wife to Azgaser."

"I am your sacrifice," said the suppliant, bowing and holding his hands to his heart. "I will talk with her about it. If she is not willing, at least you will give me back my 50 tomans, will you not?"

"Silly man," exclaimed the bishop, "consider yourself well off if I do not have you beaten."

To placate the bishop, Mariam's betrothal to Abgar was declared off. This was no breach of custom, as the public ceremony had not taken place.

But Mariam, happy in the consciousness of the love of her suitor, refused to listen to any plan for engaging her to Azgaser. The bishop therefore withdrew all protection from Mukdasi Hohannes, who then appealed to the Mission. The missionary

Hakim enjoyed the favor of those in power. He was beloved of his character and skillfulness in his art. Many of the great men of the city delighted to be called his friends, and the Crown Prince and Governor-General regularly summoned him to attend them in sickness. It needed but a plea from the Hakim on behalf of Hohannes to secure an order commanding the local authorities to confirm Hohannes in possession of his property and to exempt him from annoyance from the Sayid. He returned to Salmas, joyfully in the hope of security. Scarcely had he arrived when the authorities, instigated by the bishop through his agent, Khubabed, arrested him on a false charge, beat and fined him. Shamesha telegraphed word of his attack to the mission and an order was sent down by the government that Hohannes should be released and the fine returned. A small part of the sum which had been extorted was paid back and he was forced under threat of torture, to give a quit-claim, stating that he had received the whole sum and was pleased with the conduct of the officials. Meanwhile, Nunia had remained in Tabriz.

At the same time the bishop decided to intimidate Badevele Gregor. In fulfillment of this purpose Unger, who had returned from Constantinople and had become a companion of Khumbabed, came to Gregor's house and ingratiated himself by listening

to his exhortations with apparent acceptance. At length, as if in confidence, he said:

"Have you not heard that there is a plot to injure you? The Armenians are greatly embittered against you because of your sermons."

"Yes," said Gregor, "I know they are, but have I spoken anything but the truth?"

"Not half of what you might say," admitted Unger. "Religion is really dead amongst us, but they say you are injuring our race, leading our young people away. I advise you to be careful. Do you not know how they killed the Catholic monk Serapeon. And the Vartabed Papasian was assassinated to cover up the other murder. He who ordered these crimes is determined to injure you, do you suppose he will spare you?"

"Why Unger, do you think they would murder you?"

"I warn you to avoid their enmity."

Just then a slight sound on the flat roof which overlooked the room in which they were seated, startled Gregor. The conversation had somewhat unstrung his nerves. Gazing out into the darkness, he inquired:

"Did you not hear a sound as of someone walking? Listen!"

Straining their ears, they heard the low whisper:

"Be sure not to shoot Unger but only Gregor."

Instantly they both moved into the corner of the room, out of range of the roof.

Gregor, all unstrung, addressed Unger.

"What does it mean?"

Unger answered: "It is as I said; they have become your enemies and are bent on your destruction. You will never be safe unless you placate them."

"Why, what can I do?" asked Gregor, trembling and anxious.

Unger knew that the object was to frighten Gregor from his work, so he said:

"You should quit preaching against the national Church. You should advise Mariam to marry Azgaser. You should cease trying to draw the young men to Protestantism."

Gregor replied: "How can I? Those things are my duty."

"Well," said Unger, rising to go; "be careful. It looks as if they were bent on mischief."

The next day Gregor, as he was going through the street, was pelted with clods of earth and stones. Instead of cowering before these persecutors, Gregor did what was least expected. Fired with indignation he went to the Turkish consul and made complaint, demanding protection as a Turkish subject. The consul was only too glad to find a cause of complaint against Armenians. He instantly pro-

cured the arrest and imprisonment of the offenders. Feeling between the two parties became very bitter.

Affairs were in this condition when Bishop Phanos conceived a plot by which he hoped to discredit the Protestants. The plan was to bring some great crime to their door under such circumstances that it would appear as an act of retaliation or revenge for the wrongs they had suffered. In the execution of this plot the bishop summoned Daniel, the candidate for the priesthood. Daniel a Salmas blacksmith, had been chosen and sent up to Tabriz for ordination. He was fulfilling his preparation by forty days of fasting and training in the liturgy and ritual of the Church.

The bishop said to Daniel: "I believe you know Mukdasi Hohannes, of Salmas?"

Daniel replied: "Yes, your holiness, for many years, and we came together from Salmas."

"Well, I want you to go to Nunia and try your best to pursuade her and Mariam to accept Azgaser's proposal of marriage."

"I shall try, holy father," agreed Daniel. "When shall I go?"

"Go this evening after you have read the evening prayers."

"According to your will," replied Daniel, and kissing the bishop's hand he withdrew.

Towards evening Daniel recollected that the day

was the anniversary of the martyrdom of the saint by whose name he was to be called after his ordination. It was a day on which it was his obligation to keep long vigils. So he returned from his cell to the bishop's quarters.

None of the attendants were in the ante-room, so Daniel entered it unannounced. He did not find the bishop in his customary seat. In the adjoining room he heard voices and approaching to knock, his own name caught his ear.

Listening attentively he heard the bishop speaking to Unger, as if summing up the points of their previous conversation.

"You have already spread reports that Daniel has led a scandalous life and that he hates bitterly the Protestants and intends to kill Gregor."

"Yes, and with the result we desired," replied Unger. "To-day several Protestants were heard denouncing him."

"So we may consider the affair settled," concluded Bishop Phanos, "when Daniel is at Nunia's lodging, you see to it that Gregor and Abgar call there. You will stab Daniel and put his dead body into the alley. Throw a pair of green spectacles, like Gregor wears, on the ground beside him. Put a bloody dagger into Abgar's room so that it will be found there afterwards. Every one will believe that they have committed the murder. We will dis-

pose of Gregor and Abgar effectually and will blacken the reputation of the Mission so that their influence will be gone forever."

Daniel was startled beyond measure. Trembling with excitement, he withdrew to his cell and tried to collect his thoughts. What should he do? He thought to himself, "This is no dream, Vartabed Papasian fell a victim to a similar plot against the Catholics. Now, must I be a victim?" When he recovered his self-possession a little, he decided on his course. When the time arrived at which he should have gone to Mukdasi Hohannes's lodging, he took refuge with the French consul the protector of the Catholic Mission and made a sworn statement to the facts of the plot. The French consul sent him to the Osmanli consul, where he gave the same testimony. Then fearing the vengeance of the Armenians who would now brand him as a traitor to his race, he fled into Russian territory without delay.

Thus a kind Providence delivered Gregor and Abgar and their cause from the machinations of their persecutors.

CHAPTER XI

In the morning the report of Daniel's story and flight stirred the community. In the afternoon an excitement of different character moved the whole city. A Mohammedan woman declared that she had been insulted by an Armenian in the street. She was the wife of a chief Mollah. Soon a crowd collected, increased by every passerby. Like wild fire the word, greatly exaggerated, spread from street to street, from bazar to bazar. A howling mob, breathing vengeance, quickly began a search for the culprit. This search in a moment turned to looting, and with an energy and vindictiveness that would soon have wiped out the Armenian quarters. The Armenian, who was accused, lived near the Memorial School. The mob gathered just above it and spread terror through the homes of the defenseless people. Several houses were looted of everything; even doors and windows were carried off. Suddenly a loud crash on the street door of Caspar's house startled its occupants. His daughter was a school mate of Mariam, who had come from school to visit her for the afternoon. She was

CASPAR AND HIS HOUSEHOLD

there when the mob suddenly swelled in volume and violence. In a moment the house would have been full of the raging people. The only safety was in flight. Caspar cast himself down from the roof on a side street. But the women, seeing him stunned and injured by the fall, declined to follow. He limped along for a distance of a square, suffering still more from the blows of the passing Moslems, who also seized his watch and money. He took refuge in the yard of the Memorial School. Sympathizers gathered around him with a hundred questions.

Abgar heard his tale and asked:

"What did your family do?"

"I supposed they would follow me," answered Caspar. "Mariam of Salmas, too, was there. I do not know what became of them."

The steward asked him: "Who was in the mob?"

"All kinds of Moslems," he replied, "even our neighbors, the shopkeepers, as well as sayids and students. I recognized Sayid Jaffar, the one who is troubling Mukdasi Hohannes, and Mir Gulam Ali, his companion. They had been pointed out to me one day in a wine-shop."

When Abgar heard this he went wild with excitement. He threw caution to the winds. Nothing could restrain him from going out to search for

Mariam. He first ventured through the streets to the Girls' School, escaping with a few cuffs from the passersby. His inquiries revealed the fact of Mariam's danger to them all, but they could give no light on her whereabouts.

The Moslem gatekeeper, Meshedi, was sent to reconnoitre at the scene of the riot. He mingled freely with the crowd, with difficulty restraining himself from joining in the looting. After a delay that seemed like ages to the anxious teachers and to Abgar, he returned. He brought no news of Mariam. He had not been able to find the slightest trace of her. He reported, however, that the Armenian who had occasioned the disturbance had bribed the Chief of Police to connive at his escape and had taken refuge at the Russian Consulate; that the Consuls had demanded of the government protection for the Christian population; that the mayor and police had galloped up and were dispersing the mob; lewd fellows of the baser sort were gathering from the suburbs and villages and it might be difficult for the government to restrain them. He said further that all the Armenians were barricading their houses or taking refuge at the Consulates. This report only increased the anxiety of all with regard to Mariam.

That night and the next day and night passed and nothing was heard of her. In the riotous condi-

tion of the city search was almost impossible. But on the third day Abgar discovered where she was and Meshedi was sent to bring her back. She was forcibly detained and Meshedi was reviled.

Mariam's story was that when she and the other woman saw that the street was unsafe for flight, they had turned and fled by the flat roofs. They had barely escaped before the mob of men rushed into the rooms. In her flight from one roof to another, now jumping to a lower one, now climbing to a higher one, she had been separated from the other women. Pressing forward in the hope of reaching the main street and going to the school, she found it impossible, for the street was full of rioters. She descended into a yard only to discover that it was occupied by a band of revolutionists. Not a woman was about the house. She had escaped from one evil but to find another.

As she stood motionless and almost breathless in the inclosed yard, a door opened and to her amazement Azgaser appeared. He, even more astonished than she was, ejaculated:

"So, my dear one, you have left that school and come to me, have you? A thousand welcomes!"

She replied: "No, I have lost my way in fleeing from the mob. Take me home."

"Oh, don't think of leaving me," said Azgaser. "Fate has sent you to me. Come in."

She felt her position a strange one and could only repeat: "Guide me to the school."

He seized his opportunity and pressed his love suit; she declined. He insisted; she refused. He persisted; she rejected. He urged; she denied him. Passionate love burned like a fire in his eyes and he grasped her hand as if he would never release it.

Involuntarily a cry escaped her lips. Several men appeared from the rooms. She began to explain and told them how she happened to be there and who she was.

One of the men came forward and said: "Why, Mariam, how strange! I am your Uncle Andreas. I have just returned from Tiflis."

She recognized him as her uncle who had gone to join the revolutionists. He agreed to take her to a proper place.

In parting he said to Azgaser, with a smile: "Rest easy, I will persuade her to become your bride and be married by the mother Church.

Andreas took Mariam to the house of one of his relatives. Here Abgar, whose search was unremittent, found her. Thence Meshedi endeavored in vain to bring her back to school.

During these days Andreas and other relatives were making persistent efforts to persuade her to give up Abgar. Finally, out of patience with her refusals, they resorted to threats and blows.

Their violence only confirmed her purpose, and facing them, she drew her finger across her throat and exclaimed:

"You may kill me, but alive I am his, and dead I am his."

Nunia was willing at first that they should bring pressure to bear upon Mariam, but seeing her fixed determination, she sided with her and wished to take her away and free her from their annoyances. This they absolutely refused to allow.

At length they pretended to yield one point to Mariam and said she could marry Abgar, but the priest should perform the ceremony. She declined to accede to this condition. Again they beat her, but she remained firm and immovable. Not to be foiled, they determined to carry her off to Tiflis. On hearing this, Nunia took alarm and demanded possession of the girl in her right as her mother.

When this was absolutely refused, she, with the support of the Mission, appealed to the government. After a hearing of the complaint, the Mustashar-i-Doulah, foreign agent, sent policemen to bring Andreas to the Dewan-Khana. As they were bringing him a mob, headed by priest Guerg, tried to release him. They were beaten back by the police, some blows were dealt them and Andreas was brought before the court with his face and clothes bespattered with blood. While the court

was in session, Mariam was taken to Bishop Phanos' house and, though the Mustashar-i-Doulah directed that she be given over to her mother she was kept by force, and all arts, persuasions and threats used to make her change her mind.

Bishop Phanos was profuse in promises. He said to her: "You shall have a magnificent trousseau and a splendid wedding; Abgar shall get a good position as a teacher, or as a clerk with Baron Sarkis, if you both only give up your Protestantism. Mukdosi Hohannes shall have protection from Sayid Jaffar and redress for his wrongs."

But she said to him: "Be assured, once for all, until the world passes away, it is impossible that I forsake my faith."

Still detained at the bishop's she secretly wrote to Abgar.

"Pray for me that God may give me wisdom and memory and the Holy Ghost to stand in trial before my proud relatives and the bishop."

Several days passed; Nunia went day by day to the court, throwing dust on her head and wearing other outward signs of a supppliant, and, pleading that her daughter be restored to her, sat until evening. Every day the officers went to bring Mariam, but the bishop refused to give her up.

Finally the mother declared to the Mustashar-i-Doulah: "I must appeal by telegraph to his High

Majesty, the King of Kings, I am his sacrifice. The Centre of the Universe will hear my humble cry."

The Mustashar replied: "If the bishop does not release her to-night I will get soldiers from the Crown Prince and break his doors and fetch her."

Bishop Phanos yielded to the inevitable and sent Mariam to her mother.

By all these trials the faith of Mariam and Abgar was strengthened. Nunia's eyes, too, were opened to see first the character of the clergy and secondly the errors and evils of the Gregorian Church, and she gave her adherence to the evangelical faith. She showed a humble and teachable mind, and a heart experience of the Spirit's grace. She quickly developed in the Christian life.

CHAPTER XII

Sayid Jaffar, before the riot against the Armenians, in which he took part, had returned to Tabriz to renew his claim against Mukdasi Hohannes. He felt sure he could finally force him and other relatives of Harun to give him large sums in order to escape further annoyance. Officials in Persia are only too glad to have such contests spun out indefinitely, for a piece of cheese reaches the judge's mouth each time he passes upon a case. Before Jaffar found opportunity to press his suit the cholera began in the city. The officials withdrew to the mountains to seek safety from its ravages and the dewan was closed.

Jaffar had supposed that no good Moslem would flee from his Kismat or fate, which would overtake him inevitably in city or mountain alike. Least of all, did he suppose that a descendant of Mohammed would be stricken down. But when he saw that the sickness was no respector of green turbans and that numerous Sayids died, he betook himself to some of the remedies which were recommended. He copied out a prayer which had been handed

down by Abdullah, son of Abbas, sewed it in a little bag and hung it as an amulet from his neck. Another prayer of Imam Jaffar Sadik he transcribed, dissolved the writing in a cup of water and drank it to secure exemption. His conscience smote him for his past addiction to arak, yet because he heard that spirits were good to prevent cholera he continued to imbibe. To make amends for this dereliction he bought a sheep, read a prayer over it several times, sacrificed it and distributed it to the poor. But vain were all these endeavors, while the women washed clothes in the stream of water from which he drank. He was stricken down.

In his extremity he called in the Mission Hakim, who had remained in the city to minister to the sick. The Hakim was accompanied by Abgar, for the regular assistant had fled, saying: "All that a man hath will he give for his life."

Abgar recognized the Sayid and said to the Hakim:

"It is the Sayid Jaffar, who has injured us so much. God has smitten him."

The Hakim replied: "We will minister to him in Christ's name. May be he will grant him repentance.

By the Hakim's desire Abgar spent the night with Sayid Jaffar. In the morning he was better.

He rapidly recovered and was profuse in his expressions of gratitude, vowing that he would never injure a Christian again.

The ravages of the terrible scourge increased day by day. Fear and death reigned. Official and private life were at a standstill. Business and pleasure were alike suspended. Funerals were passing day and night. Before many doors carpets were spread and mourners sat in the streets for prayer and lamentation. At night the reading of the Mollahs and the wails of the afflicted could be heard on every side. Ten thousand bodies buried within the city in shallow graves polluted the atmosphere. Worst of all, some of the corpses were put on the surface of the ground and a casement of brick and plaster built over them, that they might be readily disinterred for transfer to the sacred soil of Kerbela or Meshed. The stench from the cemeteries was so great that men passed them holding to their nostrils garlic or camphor.

Many Armenians, including Khumbabed, Azgaser and Unger fled to the mountains. There they and other revolutionists made life a scene of revelry. Nicknaming their deck of cards, "The book of Psalms," they would say, "Come, let us sing a psalm," and pass the days in gambling and drinking.

Nunia was lodging in the city with a poor rela-

tive, where quarantine was impossible, as several families occupied the same yard. She was stricken with the dread disease.

Yeksabet immediately came to the Hakim and said: "I want to go and take care of Nunia."

The Hakim warned Yeksabet, saying: "You know the danger."

She answered: "She is my sister in Christ, and a stranger in the city; I wish to help her."

Abgar and Mariam, too, did all they could for the sick one, but their efforts were unavailing. In view of death Nunia praised God for her new experience of Jesus' love. Her joy in Christ was abounding. After Nunia had breathed her last, Yeksabet was taken sick and came near death's door, but happily recovered.

When the Sahib went to conduct the funeral of Nunia he found the Armenian priest already there and in charge — his candles burning and his censor swinging. Mariam insisted that the Sahib should conduct the service. The relative of Nunia was an old vixen. She had been used to come to her gate when she saw a man passing, carrying his Bible and hymn book, and to curse, saying: "Perish those devil books." This vixen was backed by a dozen wine-excited neighbors. Mariam urged her mother's rights with strong words. Priest Guerg joined in, reviling Mariam in vile language. A

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fight was imminent. To avoid this the Protestants waived their rights and stood by, while the priest continued his incense burning and unintelligent prayers.

The next to sicken of the cholera was Bishop Phanos. In their hour of need he had not forsaken his people, and their desire for his recovery was very touching. They did what they could for him. They formed processions, circling the church and repeating prayers. They sacrificed sheep for his benefit. Many of them, especially the women, visited the cemetery of Mother Mary and kissed the stones of the shrine with much fervor and devotion. Others sent to a monastery near Khoi and brought a sacred relic, reputed to be the hand of the protomartyr Stephen, in the belief that its coming into the city would bring relief to the patient.

Bishop Phanos himself cared for none of these things. He said to the deacon who was acting as his nurse: "Call the Missionary Hakim."

"Why so? Your holiness has opposed the Mission so bitterly, do you think they will return good for evil?"

The bishop replied: "Yes, they are true people, we can trust them, even though we have injured them."

The Hakim, assisted by Abgar, did what medical skill could do for the dying enemy of gospel

work, but their efforts were in vain, for he was fatally ill and death came soon.

In all these days of common work and interest for the suffering and dying, Abgar and Mariam grew closer together. Their mutual sympathies were enlarged, their admiration for each other increased as their finer traits of character were brought out in the crucible of trial. Mariam saw that though Azgaser might be brave to denounce Kurds and Turks, Abgar had a higher quality of courage in the face of greater danger.

CHAPTER XIII.

In a large upper room in the Lelawa quarter of Tabriz a group of Armenian revolutionists were seated. The windows of the room faced the inner yard, except a small iron-barred window, overlooking a narrow alley, which came to an end at the door. The door itself was made of solid heavy hardwood planks and securely fastened with chains and bolts — the ordinary defense against mobs and robbers. The room was full of tobacco fumes and the odor of liquors.

This band was evidently in a state of great excitement. Khumbabed's piercing eye was flashing fire, and his straight black hair, completely disheveled, gave a more than ordinary fierce and determined look to his countenance. He was interrogating a heavy-set, full-faced, dark-complexioned man in journey attire. The latter was evidently a refugee from Turkey. His name was Pakhusdagan.

"In what condition," began Khumbabed, "did you leave our people in Harput?"

"Alas," said the refugee, "our country is desolate. The Kurds have swept away our villages, tens

of thousands have been massacred in cold blood, our sisters and our brides have been taken captive to the Moslem harems. Many of the women and children, and old gray-haired men have been slain at the altars where they fled for safety. The churches are burnt and defiled and turned into stables. Some of our countrymen, alas, to save the lives and honor of their wives and daughters have accepted Islam, hoping for a better day when they can kiss the cross and be reconsecrated with the Meeron."

"But did our people make no resistance?" said Khumbabed, continuing his inquiry. "Would they had sold their lives dear!"

"Many would gladly have done so," answered Pakhusdagan, "as our brave comrades of Zeitun who withstood the Sultan's host, but unarmed, what could defenseless villagers do against the Hamidiah cavalry? The attempt made in Sassun was, as you know, ruthlessly suppressed and the bodies of the victims, covered with naphtha and thrown indiscriminately on one another, were a burnt offering to liberty."

"But Van escaped, did it not?" interrupted Unger.

"The city has escaped massacre," replied Pakhusdagan, "but on a strange condition. The government commanded that all the young men, those on whose courage and spirit our hope was set,

should leave the city, and on that condition they would spare the common people. Seven hundred of the youth, the flower of the city, left its gates and gathered near a monastery some miles away. When I left them they hoped to cross into Persia or Russia and find safety."

Just then there was a loud knock with the iron clapper. Peering through the iron bars, Unger asked:

"Who's there?"

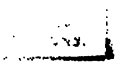
In answer the countersign was given, and Azgaser with several strangers entered and exclaimed:

"Alas, have you heard the latest? It is the saddest of all. The seven hundred young men of Van retreated before the Sultan's troops, fighting as best they could, for they had only sixty guns and their ammunition was short. When it gave out they fled, guided by our trusty Harut. Many escaped and were safe beyond the border, when Sheriff Agha, Sheikh of the Kurds, waylaid them. He killed many of them on the highway in cold blood, and hunted the rest through all the hills and vales, so that only a few have escaped. These are some of them."

"Avak! Curses on him!" said Khumbabed. "We must take vengeance on him. We must redden his white beard with his own gore."

"Certainly," said Azgaser, "we must make him

KURDISH WARRIORS NEAR SALMAS—TRIBE OF SHERIF AGHA



eat dirt and send him to his burnt fathers and that before the snow melts again from Ararat."

"I propose," exclaimed Unger, "that we do as in the case of the traitor Serapeon, that babbling monk, that we appoint by lot one of our trusty men to go secretly and stab the villain to the heart. We are sworn to do whatever our cause demands.

"It seems to me," declared Azgaser, "that the tribe is guilty with their villain chief. I move that we organize an expedition against the Kurds. Let us call on all our members who are at hand and attack them, exacting life for life for our slaughtered comrades."

"Getseh," "Bravo," echoed one and another of the band.

Khumbabed expressed his hearty approval of the determination of the company, and after an exchange of views, in conclusion stated the plan:

"We will gather our brave band together. We will call from Russia, from Teheran and from Hamadan, picked comrades and enlist some new ones. A new box of muskets has already crossed the Arras, which we bought of the colonel in charge of the Russian Arsenal at K——. Success to our expedition. Drink to it!"

They emptied their glasses to its success.

Azgaser jumped to his feet and shouted: "Here's to free Armenia!"

All sprang up and again emptied their glasses of the pale Azerbijan wine, while they shouted: "Long live free Armenia!"

During the following days, strenuous preparations were made. Khumbabed, in casting about for new recruits, settled on Abgar as a suitable man. Unger was put on his track. His social, attractive manner made it easy for him to ingratiate himself with Abgar. He worked upon his heart tales of the terrible sufferings of their people in Turkey. Abgar knew it was all true and more, too, for had not the fathers and many relatives of his beloved teacher and honored preacher been murdered in cold blood and their homes made desolate. Unger pictured the beauty of patriotism with tales of Garibaldi and Bozzaris, of Kussoth and Washington, until to fight for one's country seemed the highest possible life. His heart was fired to emulate heroic deeds. He was not told of the contemplated expedition, but invited to join the society in order to free his country and its oppressed people.

Abgar wished to show that it was a slander when he was accused of being a traitor to his race, and of being no longer an Armenian, because he had become a Protestant. He hesitated because he knew that the missionaries and his teachers did not approve of the methods of the revolutionary societies, nor regard intimate association with them as con-

ductive to high Christian character. Hence he avoided seeking the advice of his teachers.

While wavering he was invited to meet Khumbabed. When the pupils were going to the usual weekly meeting he secretly turned aside and went to the house of the revolutionists. He was greatly impressed by Khumbabed. His magnetism, his persuasive power, his earnestness of conviction made him a powerful propagandist. Abgar was overwhelmed by his words and flattered by his attentions. Whatever hesitancy he had had was completely swept away. He yielded himself to the movement as a new and ardent disciple. Later in the evening the members of the bad gathered and initiated the new disciple. The object of the society was explained, Abgar was bound to implicit obedience by strictest oaths and imprecations. His vow under forfeit of life was to fulfil absolutely and unquestioningly all the commands of his superiors. Whatever doubt Abgar in his normal condition might have had concerning the rightness of submitting his will or the control of his conduct to another person was dissipated by the excitement of the occasion. He surrendered himself unreservedly to the cause.

The remainder of the evening was spent in perfecting the plans for the attack. It was arranged that the members should go unobserved to different villages of Salmas and should thence on a certain

evening gather, fully equipped, inside the new wall of Derik Monastery.

Abgar, infatuated by his new interests, lost all desire to pursue his studies and could scarcely await the day of departure. He obtained the Sahib permission to be absent to attend the wedding of a relative and to spend the next day with him.

He then went to give good-bye to Mariam. After greetings she said:

"Why, Abgar, you look so disturbed; what can be the matter?"

He became even more confused, but replied:

"If you promise not to tell any one I will tell you."

She answered: "I promise for I trust you in everything."

He without further hesitation said to her: "I am going away to fight for fatherland."

"Oh! Where are you going? Why do you go?" exclaimed Mariam the tears coming into her eyes.

"I cannot tell you where, my dearest," said Abgar, "but I go for the good of our Armenian people."

"Oh, my dear Abgar, I beseech you to give up the notion. The cruel Kurds will kill you and I shall die in grief," pleaded Mariam.

Abgar laughed at her fears, but knowing that

talking about it would not make parting easier, he arose, saying:

"Be of good cheer, my Mariam. Remain in peace. I will come back safely to you soon."

She walked with him to the gate, saying with wisdom beyond her years:

"Oh, Abgar, there are many temptations among those evil men. Pray and watch that you may be true to your faith and your Saviour."

On the appointed day all gathered at the monastery and received instructions. Toward dusk, leaving by twos and threes and going by by-paths and across hills they reached their final rendezvous — a clump of trees in a narrow secluded gulley through which a rivulet ran. An old, unused mill afforded a still more perfect concealment to the band. The unaccustomed circumstances gave a feeling of solemnity to the men which was unusual. They felt the seriousness of facing death, as to most of them a bloody encounter was a new experience and it wore a different aspect than when viewed from a secluded room in Tabriz. Der Arsen, a revolutionist who had been ordained and clothed with the pilon of a priest, proposed that the Mass be celebrated, in imitation of Russian army customs.

When the priest passed the consecrated water, Abgar shook his head in refusal and continued

silently meditating and praying, half repenting that he had joined the enterprise.

But Azgaser was filled with wrath by the ceremony of the sacrament. All his infidel feelings were aroused. He rose from his seat, seized a gun, and jumped to the door of the mill. Raising his gun toward heaven he fired, exclaiming with a terrible malediction: "I shoot at a God who allows his people to be massacred by infidel Turks. Away with a Jesus who teaches us to turn the other cheek to the smiter."

A murmur of horror passed round the mill. Even those hardened men were shocked at the blasphemy. Almost instantly there was an answering shot from the mountain side. Then all was still.

Soon Khumbabed began to make his disposition of the men. He had himself been up to the tents of the Kurds on the previous day, disguised as a Jewish peddler, and was familiar with their situation. He had decided that the attack should be from all sides. The men were divided into squads of 20, who should attack simultaneously after having surrounded the tents. The Sheikh's tent was on the lower side, partly under a tree, near a spring. It was known that a guard of two was always stationed before his tent. Two squads were sent against this point, as it was specially desired to kill the Sheikh. Because it was the most dangerous duty, Azgaser had

THE ARMENIAN PATRIOTS WITH BANNER INSCRIBED "REVENGE"
KHUMBABED, AZGASER, ABGAR AND THEIR BAND

suggested to Khumbabed that Abgar be appointed a member of the advance squad against the Sheikh's tent. Azgaser planned in this way, hoping that in the attack Abgar might be killed and thus the chief obstacle to his obtaining Mariam be removed. Khumbabed, who admired Abgar for his self-control and daring, without suspicion accepted the suggestion and assigned to Unger the leadership of the squad, with Abgar as his second. To Azgaser was assigned the leadership of the second squad, with Sagatiel as his aide. The latter were to rush upon the Sheikh's tent from the rear. Silently the squads went forth and sought their respective places. The watches of the leaders were turned alike and exactly at midnight they were to attack in unison. Before the appointed time and when many had not yet reached their positions Kurds unexpectedly attacked the first squad, for their suspicions had been aroused by the solitary shot heard some time before and they had placed extra guards. The Kurds suddenly rose in their path and thrust their spears at them. Unger fell with a groan. Abgar parried the spear thrust at which was aimed at him and gave the Kurd a blow with his gun barrel, which knocked him senseless. A third Kurd fired with his revolver. The shot grazed Abgar's scalp and stunned him, so that he fell over, spraining his knee in the fall. He was unable to rise. The attack now became gen-

eral. Firing was heard on all sides. The fierce shouts of the Kurds mingled with the cries of the women and the groaning of the wounded.

Azgaser and Sagatiel penetrated to the tent of the Sheikh, and firing at a retreating figure saw the Sheikh's wife fall down before them. The Sheikh was not there, for he had not laid aside his arms, and at the first sound he had risen and rushed forth. They set fire to the tent and went forth to seek the Sheikh. They came face to face with him and his bodyguard. A fusilade followed and Sagatiel dropped dead. Azgaser avenged the death of his comrade by a shot at the heart of the assailant. Several fell on both sides. The Sheikh raised his gun and took fair aim at Azgaser. His kismat seemed sealed. But Abgar, who was unable to rise, saw it all, and instantly from his fallen position threw his dagger at the Sheikh. It struck his arm and moved it so that the shot passed through the shoulder of Azgaser instead of his heart, at which the Sheikh had aimed. Azgaser fell, covered with blood.

A regular melee ensued. More on both sides were slain. But the contest seemed to be going against the band and Khumbabed gave the signal for retreat. Azgaser, Abgar and the other wounded were half dragged and half carried from the scene of carnage. The Kurds, fearing an am-

bush in the darkness, did not follow them. Ambulance stretchers were improvised from the mill-doors. A Nestorian surgeon from Salmas was forcibly summoned to come and dress the wounds. He advised that Abgar and Azgaser should be removed to Westminster Hospital in Urumia.

When Abgar was safely and comfortably quartered under the kind care of the Hakims and had been assured that his wound and knee-sprain would only require time to heal, his anxiety abated. He then had opportunity to think. In the clearer vision of after-thought, with the recollection of the strife and the dead in his mind, he saw what a grave mistake he had made. He thanked God for spared life. He assured his father who visited him and vowed to his Saviour that he would hereafter keep out of such entanglements.

With Azgaser the Hakim's task was more difficult. His wound was probed, the bullet extracted and proper treatment given. But the expected healing was long delayed. The effect of his dissipated life and of the habitual use of liquor and tobacco was such that the wound would not readily heal. The Hakim's kind heart was moved for the suffering youth. He often stopped by his bedside to lead his thoughts to the realities of the spiritual life. Abgar newly awakened, longed for the soul of his companion. They had many conversations

together. Azgaser's heart was deeply moved by the kindness shown him and by Christ's love so manifested.

One day he said to Abgar: "God has punished me for my sins. That night, by my blasphemous shot, I made known our presence to the Kurds and brought death to my comrades. I pray that he may forgive me. I wished to have you killed but you saved my life. Forgive me. I have persecuted the Protestants, but their spirit is shown in their love to me now. I know that Protestantism is the true form of Christianity — the best and only religion to live by and die by. God grant me his salvation, God grant a reformation to our people, to our ancient Church."

Abgar, overcome with emotion, could only exclaim, "Thank God, the kingdom of God is come near to you."

CHAPTER XIV

Chastened by his experience, matured in character, but withal humbled on account of being enticed into such an unprofitable and questionable escapade, Abgar returned to the Memorial School. It was not hard for his friends to forgive him, for when the whole story was known, admiration mingled with condemnation.

Thereafter life was less eventful for him as well as for Mariam. The troublesome bishop was dead. Azgaser withdrew from the revolutionary movement and went back to Russia, determined hereafter to show his love for his people by striving for their advancement through education and moral culture.

Sayid Jaffar, after his recovery from cholera, heard a sermon of a Mollah, in which he affirmed that the cholera had been sent as a scourge upon the Moslems because they were aping Christian ways and that the medicines which the Christians had given them were meant to kill them, and only the power of the Imams had delivered any of their patients out of their hands. So the Sayid, accord-

ing to his natural bent, returned to his hatred of Christians and many were the works of iniquity which he wrought in his wild career of robbery, rape and murder. But Abgar had kindled in the Sayid that spark of good which is in many of the basest natures, so that gratitude constrained him to hold his decision never to molest or injure Mariam.

The hearts of the Armenians soon awoke to a true appreciation of the missionaries. They saw that in the massacres in Turkey Protestants suffered equally with Gregorians, that they, too, like Abgar, had the hearts of patriots. Fellow sufferings melted prejudices. The deep sympathy and abounding charity of evangelical Christians everywhere, which poured its treasure out to relieve the famished and support the orphaned and widowed among the Armenians, begat love in their hearts.

The new bishop, a man of kindly disposition and a lover of peace, acquainted with the English language and with Anglo-Saxon ideas of religious liberty, pursued a policy far different from his predecessor. Soon enmity gave place to cordial relations and mutual regard. Under these new conditions, Abgar received the ready assent of all when he desired that his public betrothal to Mariam should be celebrated. The friends were invited to the parlor of the Girls' School. Khunchas or

WESTMINSTER HOSPITAL, URUMIA
GROUP OF MEN PATIENTS

wooden trays of cakes and candies were brought and placed on the floor. A large gilded loaf of sugar was a special feature of each tray. The engagement pledges were placed on the central tray. Abgar and Mariam stood before the preacher, who read the story of Rebecca's betrothal to Isaac. He asked them if they desired to be betrothed and to give and receive their nishans or pledges, and then gave to the bride the ring, a necklace of beads with some pendant coins and a silver belt of filigree work. As an innovation they presented to each other gilt-bound, brass-clasped Bibles, with their names and the date inscribed on them. After beseeching on their betrothal the divine blessing, Badvele Gregor sat down and took his knife and hammer, which were at hand for the purpose, and broke in pieces the heads of sugar. The sugar and candies were distributed to the guests on saucers, while the large end of the sugar loaf was reserved as the perquisite of the preacher.

The guests then congratulated the happy pair and departed, taking their portion of sweets with them for good luck. Thereafter Abgar and Mariam were able to pursue in peace and with undivided attention their courses of study. After they were graduated Mariam engaged for several years in the work of teaching in her alma mater, while Abgar completed a course in theology.

At length there came a day when an old woman went around and presented a red apple to each of their friends and besought their presence at wedding festivities. The women as the bride's guests, gathered at the Girls' School, but Baron Sarkis threw open his mansion for the men as the groom's guests. The fruits of the season were served. Tea, flavored with bitter orange, was drunk from tiny glasses. Musicians with fife and viol, drum and tambourine, enlivened the hours while the men and the women apart danced to their own delectation. After several hours the bridegroom was formally clothed with his wedding suit, a gift which has just been sent from the bride, and the procession formed to go to the bride's house. In front marched the band playing their weird tunes. School-boys, bearing torches and candelabra, added their songs. Amid this glare and noise, "the friend of the bridegroom" conducted him, arm in arm, through the streets.

Meanwhile, to the assembled women, Mariam exhibited her trousseau, and they gossiped and chatted over the dresses and various garments, the ribbons and kerchiefs, the comforters, pillows and quilts. Mukdasi Hohannes, his ideal fulfilled and his heart swelling with pride, had furnished an ample dowry for his beloved daughter. Bundle after bundle was exhibited to the admiring spectators.

Great interest was displayed when Mariam was adorned with the bridal attire, which had come from the groom. Her hair hung in long braids down her back. The flat skull-cap of girlhood was exchanged for a crown of embroidered velvet, the symbol of wedlock. Over this a white silk kerchief and red gauze veil, embroidered with gold thread, were tied.

By the time the bride was decorated there was a cry: "Behold, the bridegroom cometh." The glare of torches appeared on the threshold, the sounds of rejoicing filled the air. The bride and groom were brought face to face. Badvele Gregor put her hand in his, saying: "As God placed the right hand of Eve in the right hand of Adam, so I do." Thus they walked together to the church, the bride moving at a snail's pace, feigning unwillingness, according to the custom. Scores of people crowded the flat roofs to see the spectacle.

The church was decorated with flowers and, as a western innovation, the organ welcomed them with a wedding march. The ceremony was lengthened to suit popular taste. There were three hymns, three prayers, several long selections from the Scriptures, a sermon and the ceremony proper.

On marching from the church the band struck up again, songs rent the air, rockets shot up in front of the procession; bouquets were showered upon

them from the roofs. At one place a policeman held his horse across the narrow street to extort a present, and at the guard house the soldiers demanded safety-money.

Arrived at Baron Sarkis' house the bridal party pledged each other with cherry sherbert; rose water was sprinkled about; the guests offered their heartfelt congratulations and then seated themselves to a bountiful repast.

Shortly afterwards the happy couple took their departure to Kurdistan, there to live and teach the degraded and ignorant of their own race and to act as ambassadors for Christ to the wild Kurds. Many, many friends "poured them on the road" as far as the suburb Lala, and bade them Godspeed, saying, "The Lord Jesus bless you." "May your lives be prolonged." "May your house be blessed'"

GLOSSARY OF FOREIGN WORDS.

Allah Akbar	= God is great
arak	= Persian brandy
arkh	= irrigating stream
awak!	= alas
Badvelee	= Reverend
Catholicos	= Chief Patriarch of the Armenians
chudra	= head covering of women
dallal	= peddler, intermediary
dolma	= vegetables stuffed with rice and meat
farash	= policeman
hakim	= doctor
hammal	= porter
hurjin	= saddle bags
kelim	= low grade carpet
khanum	= lady
kran	= coin worth 8 cents
kurisee	= table over underground oven
mashallah!	= what God wills!
matsun	= card
meeron	= holy oil

mollah	= Moslem priest
mukdasi	= pilgrim to Jerusalem
ojak	= fire place
pilau	= boiled rice
Sahib	= Mister
saka	= water carrier
saki	= platform in stable
sayid	= descendant of Mohammed
shamesha	= deacon
samavar	= tea-urn
toman	= coin of value of 80 cents
tulug	= leather water-bottle
vartabed	= chief monk
Vy!	= Woe!

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